

U.S. copyright law (title 17 of U.S. code) governs the reproduction and redistribution of copyrighted material. The copyright owner retains all rights to this work.

NOAH T. BYARS-A STUDY IN
BAPTIST MISSIONARY EFFORT
ON THE FRONTIER

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas in Partial Fulfill-
ment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Thomas Robert Havins, B.A. M.A.

Austin, Texas,

June, 1941

Preface

One hundred and thirty-five years have elapsed since Noah T. Byars was born in South Carolina. Likewise, more than a half-century has passed since his death. Byars was an obscure man, and, narrowly interpreted, his biography need fill only a few pages. The fact, however, that, obscure though he was, he had a place in a great historical period and that he helped to mould that period makes his life and activity worthy of a serious study. It is from this point of view that this work has been written.

The sources on some phases of Byars' life have been meager. In fact, so meager have been some of them that certain phases are not clear. The source materials have been widely scattered. By far the greater portion was found in the library of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Some of the more illuminating were found in the State Library. Intimate family sources were accessible through the generosity of the descendants of Byars.

Valuable aid in writing this work has been received from a great number of people. To name them all would be laborious. To neglect to name others would be ungrateful. I desire to thank Dr. L. R. Elliott for his aid in locating materials in the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Library. Without the help of Miss Harriet Smither certain items in the State Library would have been overlooked.

Gift of Am. Lib.

JUN 14 1941

Mr. Charles Byars rendered valuable aid in the loan of a number of letters. Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Dilday furnished information that was indispensable. Dr. Eugene C. Barker guided me in the organization of the entire work. Finally, my daughter, Mary, aided in the reading of the proof.

Brownwood, Texas,

June, 1940

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I - Baptist Backgrounds.....	1-24
Beginnings in New England.....	1
The Philadelphia Association.....	6
Missionary Societies.....	9
The First Convention.....	11
State Conventions.....	12
Southern Baptist Convention.....	13
Early Texas Efforts.....	15
The First Baptist Church.....	16
Baptist Associations.....	18
Baptist State Convention.....	22
CHAPTER II - The Byars Family.....	25-42
Frontier South Carolina.....	25
Byars Family History.....	31
CHAPTER III - Byars in Texas.....	43-72
Washington-on-the-Brazos.....	43
Political Disturbances.....	49
The Convention.....	57
Political Activities.....	65
CHAPTER IV - Missionary Labors.....	73-119
Ordination.....	73
Early Ministerial Labor.....	77
Waco and the Upper Brazos.....	83
Proposed Indian Mission.....	87

West Fork and Brazos River Associations.....	92
Civil War Period.....	98
Activities in Mississippi.....	102
West Fork Association.....	103
Salado Association.....	105
Brown County.....	116
CHAPTER V - Missionary Methods.....	120-145
General Organization.....	120
Organization of Churches.....	124
Preaching.....	126
Revival Meetings.....	128
Sunday Schools.....	134
Religious Literature.....	138
Ministers' and Deacons' Conferences.....	144
CHAPTER VI - Missionary Difficulties.....	146-184
The Frontier.....	146
Social Conditions.....	151
The Indians.....	161
The Civil War.....	166
Religious Controversy.....	173
CHAPTER VII - Missionary Accomplishments.....	185-204
Churches and Associations.....	185
Baptist Schools.....	190
The Temperance Crusade.....	194
Personal Influence.....	201

CHAPTER VIII - Last Years.....	205-211
CHAPTER IX - Among the Brethren.....	212-223
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	224-230

CHAPTER I

Baptist Backgrounds

Beginnings in New England

The desire for both political and religious liberty contributed greatly to the colonizing of North America. Any attempt to determine which of the two was the stronger would be futile. Certainly the religious motive was apparent in the founding of Maryland, Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Rhode Island, and it was a secondary consideration in Penn's enterprise on the Delaware River. Englishmen and others in coming to these colonies expected to achieve religious liberty, but in some of them the founders were not always careful to consider the liberty of conscience of those who differed from themselves, and, because of this, the history of some of the colonies is a story of religious bigotry, of prosecutions, of persecutions, and of reprisals involving the very antithesis of religious liberty and political sovereignty.

To Roger Williams belongs the distinction of being the first to feel the severity of religious persecution in the colonies, and to him also belongs the distinction of being the first to introduce in America the Baptist doctrine of believers' baptism and to organize a church on the principles of the Baptist faith. Embarking from

1 A. H. Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 59.

England, he landed at Boston in February, 1631. The leading men of the Massachusetts Bay Colony invited him to membership in the local church, but Williams refused to affiliate with the Puritan group, giving as his reason that the civil authorities in Boston were seeking to interfere in spiritual matters. He had been in the colony but a few weeks when the church at Plymouth invited him to become assistant to the pastor there. When news of the action of the Plymouth church reached Boston, the leaders in the Massachusetts Bay Colony remonstrated. The church at Plymouth stood firm, and Williams began his work. The Boston leaders were not willing to let the matter rest, and a long and bitter struggle ensued. So harsh became the persecution of Williams by the Puritans of Boston that he left Plymouth and made his way southward into Rhode Island, where he gathered about himself a small group of his followers. There he founded a colony called Providence, and there he organized, sometime in March, 1639, the first Baptist church in America.²

Subsequent to the unhappy experience of Williams

² Oscar S. Straus, Roger Williams- The Pioneer of Religious Liberty, 13-41.

in Massachusetts, Baptists made little progress in that region, and it was not until 1649 that a Baptist church came into existence in any part of New England outside of Rhode Island.³

³ Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 59.

Farther south along the Atlantic coast the separatist principles of the Baptists found a less harsh reception. In 1681 William Penn purchased from Charles II the large territory which later came to be known as Pennsylvania. Penn was a Quaker, and desiring to secure religious freedom for his brethren in England, he opened his colony to peoples of all faiths. Welch Baptists in Britain took advantage of Penn's offer and immigrated to the new colony in relatively large numbers. These newcomers set up their first church in 1684. Another church at Penepek, below Philadelphia, came into being in 1689. In addition to these two churches there were at least ten other groups of Baptists worshipping under the missionary efforts of the church at Penepek.⁴ The owners of the Jersey territory adopted

4 Ibid., 200-203.

the same liberal policy toward dissenters as Penn, and New Jersey early saw an influx of Baptists, Quakers, and Dutch Mennonites. The Baptists in New Jersey were a militant group and propagated their doctrines as far south as South Carolina and Georgia.⁵

5 Ibid.

Conditions were different in Virginia. The Established Church was thoroughly entrenched. Dissenters were to be

found among the population, though not in great numbers. Taking notice of the presence of such, the Assembly, in its session of 1661-1662, passed an act directed against dissenters in general and against Baptists in particular because of their refusal to have their children baptized by Anglican clergymen as the law directed. The act read:

Whereas, Many schismatical persons, out of their aversion to the orthodox established religion, or out of the newfangled conceits of their own heretical inventions, refuse to have their children baptized,

Be it therefore enacted, That all persons that in contempt of the divine sacrament of baptism, shall refuse when they carry their child to a lawful minister in that county, to have them baptized, shall be amerced two thousand pounds of tobacco, half to the informer, half to the public. 6

6 B.F.Riley, A History of the Baptists of the Southern States East of the Mississippi, 15.

Legislation of this type put a premium on intolerance, and the dissenters suffered accordingly. The Baptists, being the chief offenders, learned how harsh religious persecution may become. The ministers, as spokesmen for the group, were the chief sufferers. Their preachers felt the weight of the law in threatenings, whippings, imprisonment,⁷ and banishment. Not until 1754 did Baptists have the

7 Lewis Peyton Little, Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in Virginia, 1-31; also Riley, 50-79.

privilege of organizing themselves into churches. Even with the organization of churches, the persecutions did not cease. Finally, toward the close of the eighteenth century, Baptists attained complete religious freedom in Virginia, very largely through the efforts of George Washington, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson.⁸

⁸ Riley, A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, 17.

South Carolina very early became a fertile field for the propagation of Baptist principles. The Lords Proprietors, who acquired the territory from the king, allowed the entrance of colonists of diverse religious views, and the Baptists under the leadership of Humphrey Blake, a brother of the celebrated English naval commander, settled on the Cooper River. Blake became the governor of the province and exerted a potent influence in securing complete religious freedom. In 1682 the colonists on the Cooper River received William Screven with open arms as he fled to them from Kittery, Maine, "with a small party of persecuted folk." Arriving at the Cooper River settlement on September 25, 1682, Screven organized the first Baptist Church in South Carolina.⁹

⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

The Baptist penetration of North Carolina and Georgia was very largely a movement from South Carolina. Among the evangelical bodies Baptists are noted for their missionary zeal. This fact explains the rapidity with which their numbers increased and with which their churches sprang up. Thus

It was a custom of the early Baptist churches of the South to make incursions into unevangelized regions, as the colonists increased and to establish what was known as "branch churches." These mission posts were nursed by the parent organization until they became sufficiently strong for independent existence. 10

10 Ibid., 29; also J.B.O.Landrum, History of Spartanburg County, South Carolina, 33.

This evangelical zeal was also the influence which made possible the spread of Baptist doctrines into Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and, a little later, into the region beyond the Mississippi River. 11

11 Riley, A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, 110-130.

The Philadelphia Association

Persecuted as dissenters of the radical type both in Great Britain and in America, the Baptists sought comfort among the members of their own group. This led to periodic meetings lasting several days among the members of numerous churches in contiguous territory. At these meetings preaching and the church ordinances were the center of interest. Such a meeting began among the churches

in Western New Jersey and around Philadelphia in 1688. Continuing the practice from year to year, the membership of the churches in this region finally met in Philadelphia on July 27, 1707, and formed the Philadelphia Association. The new body superseded the old in practice more than in fact. Where previously members of the churches came to the meetings as individuals with no authority to act for their brethren, in the newly formed association they came as delegates representing churches.¹² This was the first

¹² William Catheart, Baptist Encyclopedia, 916.

Baptist association within the boundaries of the United States. From this beginning in 1707, the practice of forming voluntary bodies into associations grew rapidly. This form of organization fitted the needs of the Baptists for missionary and evangelical endeavors, which they found to be almost "impossible of carrying out as single units."¹³

¹³ E.P. Marshall, Treatise Upon Baptist Church Jurisprudence, 309.

The Baptists during their entire history have been conspicuous for their insistence upon a regenerated church membership and upon immersion as the only valid form of baptism. Following the founding of the Philadelphia Association, disturbing elements filtered into the membership

within the body, and by 1724 the organization felt that a statement of its doctrines and views was necessary. Accordingly, the delegates ~~from~~^{at} the churches met and voiced their approval of "the Confession of Faith set forth by the elders and brethren met in London, 1689 and owned by us." ¹⁴

¹⁴ W.J. McGlothlin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 294. The Confession of Faith adopted by the Philadelphia Association was the Westminster Confession, which the English Baptists had adopted, and it was strongly Calvinistic in its statements.

Almost two decades passed before the churches of the Philadelphia Association felt called upon to make a further statement regarding their doctrines. Continued opposition by certain individuals to the strong Calvinistic leanings of the Westminster Confession led the Association in 1742 to order the confession printed. From the publication of this document, it had a wide circulation and came to be known in America as the Philadelphia Confession. ¹⁵ Using

¹⁵ Ibid., 295. The Philadelphia Confession was used by all Baptist churches during the eighteenth century, and is still used by practically all Baptist churches along the Atlantic seaboard.

this confession of faith, the churches made steady progress, and there was little discord over it until the meeting of the New Hampshire Baptists in 1830. A numerous group in that state holding Arminian views ¹⁶ clamored for a modi-

16 The Arminian doctrine is attributed to the followers of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian who opposed the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination.

fication of the Philadelphia Confession. They were successful in carrying their point, and the Convention appointed a committee to write a modified confession. This committee made its final report at the yearly meeting in 1833. The document which the committee recommended was mildly Calvinistic and less than one-half as long as the Philadelphia Confession. The Convention adopted the new instrument, and it soon proved popular in the South and Southwest. It came to be known as the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith.¹⁷

17 Ibid., 300-302. The New Hampshire Declaration was incorporated in J. Newton Brown's Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, first published in 1841. Brown voiced his approval of the document thus: "The following brief Declaration of Faith, with the church covenant, was recently published by the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire and is believed to express, with little variation, the general sentiment of the body in the United States." It was given a still greater influence by J. R. Graves, editor of the Tennessee Baptist, the most widely circulated Baptist paper in the Southwest, and by the Reverend J. M. Pendleton of Upland, Pennsylvania, who published it as an item in his widely-circulated Church Covenant. Byars used the New Hampshire Declaration in constituting churches in Texas after the publication of Brown's Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. See Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

Missionary Societies

Prior to the year 1812, Baptists in America had taken little or no part in missionary enterprises other than in evangelistic efforts in the more remote regions of the United

States, and this work fell very largely upon the shoulders of individual ministers whose desires to preach the gospel impelled them to go forth on their own initiative. Groups of students in Andover Academy and in Tufts College in 1810 gave impetus to a movement which resulted in the organization of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Board sent out five men as missionaries to Asia. Among them were Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. These two became converts to the Baptist faith while on shipboard en route to Burma and received baptism into the Baptist fellowship upon their arrival there. Judson felt that he now had no claim upon the board that had sent him to his field, since he had embraced the new faith. He immediately wrote to several Baptist leaders in the United States, suggesting that they take steps to form a foreign mission society. Rice shared the opinion of Judson and determined to return to America for the purpose of arousing the Baptists to follow the suggestion of Judson.

Acting on the advice of Judson, the Baptist leaders of New England met in Boston in January, 1813, and organized The Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel to India and other Foreign Parts. Rice returned to America in the summer of 1813, and at the request of the leaders among the Baptists in New England, visited the Eastern, Middle, and Southern states for the purpose of organizing similar missionary societies. The new enterprise met with almost universal success. Especially did the Southern states respond to the appeal. One of the most influential of the new societies was that of the Savannah Baptist Association, which at that

time embraced within its borders a number of churches in
 Georgia and South Carolina.¹⁸

¹⁸ Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 388-393.

The First Convention

The newly formed missionary societies aroused the Baptists to extraordinary efforts in missionary enterprises. In May, 1814, thirty-three delegates from "missionary societies and other religious bodies" met in Philadelphia and formed "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions."¹⁹ The constitution of the body provided

¹⁹ Cathcart, Baptist Encyclopedia, 1164.

for triennial meetings, and it took the popular appellation²⁰ of the Triennial Convention. The Convention assumed for

²⁰ Ibid., 1165.

its work the support of the Judsons in Burma, domestic missions in America, education, and the publication and²¹ distribution of religious literature.

²¹ Ibid., 1166.

State Conventions

The Triennial Convention, organized as it was on a national scale, gave impetus to Baptist work and Baptist principles, and only a decade elapsed after its inception until the different states were organizing their work on the pattern of the mother convention. South Carolina led the way in 1821. Georgia followed the next year. The year 1823 saw Connecticut and Virginia setting up their organizations. Maine was next in line in the middle of 1824. New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont set up their missionary programs in 1825. North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, and Kentucky lagged behind a few years. It was not until 1837 that Kentucky, the last of the four, had her convention in order.

22 Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 403-405.

The Baptists justify the organization of large voluntary groups such as the conventions soon became, on the argument that "They are in a great measure dependent on them for the spread of the gospel at home and in foreign lands,- not only so, but for the contiguity, the unity, and the purity of the faith." Again, they form the larger groups because "this want induces men into the churches, churches into associations, associations into conventions; until the whole denomination is to some extent at least, knit together

into one grand social unit."²³

23 Marshall, A Treatise on Baptist Church Jurisprudence, 309.

From the very beginning of the convention idea among the Baptists, missionary endeavor occupied a foremost position. Foreign missions had the first call, but domestic missions were not neglected. With the meeting of the Triennial Convention in 1817 the constitution of the body was amended for the purpose of allowing the mission board to allocate a portion of its funds for domestic missions "in such parts of this country as the seed of the word may be advantageously cast." The funds thus provided were the resource on which the board relied in sending missionaries to the South and Southwest, and finally resulted in the coming to Texas, in 1840, of James Huckins as a representative of Baptist organized work in the United States.²⁴

24 Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 396; James Milton Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 137-157; H. H. Furman to Benj. C. Franklin, January 20, 1840, in Franklin Papers, Archives, University of Texas.

Southern Baptist Convention

The various churches North and South, along with the associations and state conventions, affiliated together in the work of the Triennial Convention until 1845, when the intensity of the abolition campaign reacted on the

sections. The Baptists of the South, being sympathetic toward slavery, withdrew on May 8, 1845, and set up their separate organization, known as the Southern Baptist Convention.²⁵

25 Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1845, p. 2. The new body differed very little from the Triennial Convention which it supplanted in the South and Southwest. Article II of the Constitution sets out its design thus: "It shall be the design of this Convention to promote Foreign and Domestic Missions and other important objects connected with our Redeemer's Kingdom, and to combine for this purpose such portions of the Baptist denomination in the United States, as may desire a general organization for Christian benevolence, which shall fully respect the independence and equal rights of the churches."

A short time after the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention, missionary enterprises, both foreign and domestic missions, came to occupy the foremost position in the work of the new body. The first year of its existence found the Domestic Missions Board sending out six missionaries. Two of these, James Huckins and William M. Tryon, represented the Board in Texas.²⁶

26 Ibid., 1846, p. 33. Huckins and Tryon had represented home mission societies, affiliated with the Triennial Convention, in Texas prior to the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention. Huckins came to Galveston in 1840 and labored in the Gulf Coast region. A native of New Hampshire, he gave offense to some of the members of the Northern Board in owning a Negro house servant, whereupon he accepted appointment under the Southern Board. Tryon was a native of New York City. He moved to Augusta, Ga., in 1832. He settled near Washington, Texas, in January, 1841, and remained in that section until his death in 1847. - Texas

Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 183-194.

Early Texas Efforts

The Domestic Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention continued its work in Texas, augmenting the number of missionaries with the growth of population.²⁷

²⁷ Texas Baptist Herald, August 14, 1879.

However much the organized efforts of the Convention may have contributed to the spread of the Baptist faith in Texas, its predecessors in the form of independent ministers and laymen had instituted the work before the coming of Huckins and Tryon. The Rev. Freeman Smalley preached at the home of his brother-in-law, William Newton, in the territory now embraced in Lamar county in the year 1822.²⁸

²⁸ Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 26.

The Rev. Joseph Bays came to Texas in 1823 and preached at San Felipe. He aroused the ire of the Mexican authorities and retired to eastern Texas. Bays was the first Baptist to preach west of the Brazos.²⁹ Thomas J. Pilgrim left New

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

York state in the autumn of 1828 with a company of emigrants and after an arduous journey made his way to San Felipe in

Austin's colony. There he opened a day school and also organized, early in 1829, the first Sunday School in Texas.³⁰

³⁰ Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 39.

The First Baptist Church

Texan grievances against Mexico were acute in 1835. In December of that troublous year came Z.N.Morrell from Tennessee. No other Baptist preacher cast a greater influence for good in his adopted state than did this humble citizen. No other Baptist preacher save N.T.Byars was more active in Baptist missionary work than was Morrell. He preached his first sermon in Texas on December 30, 1835.³¹

³¹ Z.N.Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 44.

He moved his family to Texas and settled near The Falls on the Brazos. Forced by Indian depredations to move southward along the Brazos from the region of the The Falls, he settled at Washington, where he found a small group of Missionary Baptists. Acquainting himself with this group, Morrell instituted a weekly prayer meeting. Assisted by J.R.Jenkins, A. Buffington and wife, H.R.Cartmell, Richard Ellis, and N.T.Byars he continued the prayer meeting for some months. Describing their meetings, Morrell wrote:

A stranger would have supposed that a whole church, well organized and drilled in some of the old states had moved in a body and settled at Washington. Cartmell, Buffington, Byers [Byars], Ellis, and Morrell, one after another led in prayer, and the singing between prayers was of the first order, in

point of time and melody. The writer would give out an appointment for preaching every Sunday, and after singing "Old Hundred" the congregation would retire.

Continuing prayer meetings until late in the summer of (November) 1837, Morrell then led in the organization of the first Baptist church in Texas with a definite mission program as a part of its endeavor, and with N.T. Byars, the subject of this narrative, as one of the constituent members of the church.³²

32 Ibid., 77.

Concerning their action in constituting the church Morrell said:

We determined, let come what might, to organize a church. The day was appointed, and eight Baptists assembled to keep house for God. Brother H.R. Cartmell was recognized as deacon, and Z.N. Morrell chosen as pastor. Thus sprung into existence the first church, according to my information, that was ever organized in Texas on strictly gospel principles, having the ordinances and officers of ancient order, and with no anti-missionary element in its body. 33

33 Ibid., 77.

The first business meeting or conference of the church at Washington was significant in that a committee of three members of the church consisting of J.R. Jenkins, A. Buffington, and H.R. Cartmell began correspondence with the

missionary societies of the North and East with a view to securing missionaries to labor in Texas. Out of this correspondence, carried on for more than a year, came the appointments of James Huckins and William M. Tryon as missionaries.³⁴

34 Ibid., 77.

Following the success of Texan arms at San Jacinto, the population increased rapidly. New Baptist leaders appeared: R.E.B. Baylor, T.W. Cox, Hosea Garrett, J.L. Davis, along with Huckins and Tryon, carried on aggressively, and seven small Baptist churches with a constituency aggregating near one hundred members had come into existence by June, 1840.³⁵

35 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 132.

Baptist Associations

These leaders had come from the section of the United States in which Baptist work was strong and, as a consequence, their training influenced their activity in the new field. Accustomed to organized associational activity, it was not long until agitation for an association in Texas began to spread. As early as June 1, 1840,

A company of brethren, with four preachers, R.E.B. Baylor, T.W. Cox, A. Smith and A. Dancer, met in the town of Independence, Washington County, to form a Baptist Association. Two of these preachers were missionary and two antimissionary. As the body could not harmonize, another appointment was made for October

at the town of Travis, Austin County.

36 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 132. Morrell's allusion to the anti-missionary group dates back to the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. Baptists divided into two groups in these years over the question of principles of doctrine, particularly with reference to the acceptance of members. They came to be known as Separate Baptists and Particular Baptists. The Separate Baptists were fervent evangelists; the Particular Baptists held to strong Calvinistic doctrines, especially in the matter of predestination. Both groups organized their churches into associations. With the organization of the Triennial Convention and the institution of mission work at home and abroad, the Particular Baptists came to style themselves Primitive Baptists, and the appellation connoted an opposition to missions. The Separate Baptists gradually dropped the word, separate, and styled themselves Baptists. The Primitive group came to Texas in comparatively large numbers. In some instances an entire church came, as in the case of Daniel Parker and his "Pilgrim Church," while in other instances individuals made their way into the settlements and took membership in the local missionary Baptist churches. Wherever such occurrences took place they almost invariably made trouble for the local group by opposition to missions, Sunday Schools, and an educated ministry. Morrell and Byars complained bitterly on many occasions regarding this opposition. See Riley, A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, 166; B.F. Fuller, History of Texas Baptists, 385-386; A.H. Newman, A Manual of Church History, II, 702.

When the time for the scheduled meeting arrived, delegates from the churches at Independence, Washington county, Lagrange, Fayette county, and Travis, Austin county, met at Travis on October 8, 1840, and under the leadership of the three ministers present, R.E.B. Baylor, T.W. Cox, and A. Davis, organized the Union Association. ³⁷ The second

37 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 132.

meeting of the association on October 7, 1841, brought delegates from nine churches with memberships numbering three hundred eighty-four.³⁸ Holding to Baptist associa-

38 Minutes, Union Association, 1841, p. 18.

tional practices that were almost one hundred fifty years old, Union Association designated missionaries to labor in Texas as representatives of that body. Without promise of a salary and facing dangers from Mexicans and from Indians, these men went forth very largely of their own volition and proceeded to organize the Baptists of Texas into local churches.³⁹

39 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 195.

Augmented by the appointment of a number of missionaries by the Domestic Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1846, Baptist churches multiplied greatly during the next decade.⁴⁰ This led to the organ-

40 Ibid., 227.

ization of two new associations in 1847. When the Union Association met in 1847, five churches along the Colorado River asked for letters of dismissal from the organization

in order that they might form another association. The request being granted, messengers from the churches met at Rocky Creek Church in Lavaca county in November and formulated a new body known as the Colorado Association. ⁴¹

⁴¹ J.B.Link, "Associations Organized Prior to 1850," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 430-431.

A desire for organization in East Texas manifested itself at the same time, and the Eastern Missionary Baptist Association was the result. The initial meeting came in December, 1847. The delegates changed the name to the ⁴² Soda Lake Association in 1848.

⁴² Ibid., 431. Before the formation of the Eastern Association the Sabine Association had functioned in that section of the state since 1843. The Primitive Baptists were strong in numbers in the Sabine country and their antimissionary sentiments predominated in the meetings. Opposing them were the Free Will Baptists and the Missionary Baptists. The Free Will Baptists formed their own association and became so liberal in their views that the Missionary Baptists as well as the Primitive Baptists refused to cooperate with them. Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 192-193.

The fourth Baptist general body to be organized prior to the founding of the Baptist State Convention was the Trinity River Association. Under the leadership of Z.N.Morrell and N.T.Byars, delegates from six churches met at the Providence Church in Navarro county late in ⁴³ July, 1848, and perfected this organization.

43 Ibid., 432.

Baptist State Convention

In the same manner in which Texas Baptists followed precedents set in the States in the instituting of associations, so, also, they followed the other precedent in the more general body of the Baptist State Convention. Between 1840 and 1848 the work in Union Association felt the impact of the personalities of Henry L. Graves, William M. Tryon, James Huckins, J. H. Stribbling, R. E. B. Baylor, Hosea Garrett, and others. These leaders, with the messengers from the various churches, met in the eighth annual session of the Union Association in Houston in October, 1847, and passed the following resolution:

Resolved, That this association appoint a Central Committee of Correspondence, composed of Elders Graves, Garrett, Ellis, Chandler, Tryon, Creath, and brethren Haynes and J. G. Thomas, whose duty it shall be to receive from the corresponding secretary the information that he may obtain, and in the event that a majority of the churches so corresponded with shall be in favor of a convention, then it shall be the duty of the central committee to appoint a time and place of meeting. 44

44 Minutes, Union Association, 1847, p. 5.

The response of the churches to the inquiry of the committee of correspondence was favorable. From all sections came information of a desire to form a state convention. The leaders in the churches realized that an organization

on a state-wide basis meant a closer unity of effort in missions, education, and evangelism than was possible under the associational plan then in vogue. The proposal meant representation of both churches and associations in the larger unit. The central committee appointed September 8, 1848, as the date for the assembling of the delegates at Anderson in Grimes county.⁴⁵ Representatives from

45 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 293.

twenty-eight churches and four associations gathered for the meeting. The territory embraced by the churches reached as far north as Robertson county, eastward to Waller county, southward to Galveston and Matagorda, and westward to Gonzales and Austin.⁴⁶

46 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 250.

Custom among the assembled delegates made necessary an introductory sermon as the first order of business. It fell to the lot of the hardy Z. N. Morrell to preach the sermon, which he did. R. E. B. Baylor presided during the organization. The constitution adopted by the Convention provided for absolute independence of the churches; for a united effort in the fields of missions, evangelism, benevolences, education, and the circulation of religious literature. This central cooperative effort started Baptists

47

in Texas on their way.

47 Proceedings, Baptist State Convention, 1848, pp.
1-14. Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, Fourth Edition, 291-296.

CHAPTER II

The Byars Family

That portion of South Carolina extending from the eightieth meridian to the western boundary of the state and occupying the territory north of the thirty-fifth parallel is known as Upper Carolina. The region lies approximately two hundred miles west of the Atlantic seaboard. In topography the section is broken and hilly. A half-dozen rivers have their source in the territory. The soil is thin, poor, and uninviting to agriculture. Crops which flourish in the coastal region and in the Piedmont Belt are unsuited to the higher section. The methods of farming are different and have been so since the first white men entered the newer territory. Farms are small as compared with the large plantations in the older areas of the state. Farming methods and the relative size of the farms made slavery unprofitable in Upper Carolina.¹ Abundance of timber and water power for mill sites,

¹ J.B.O.Landrum, Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina, 21

along with plenty of game and a more or less friendly Indian population, made the section a haven for restless pioneers who felt the crowding of their neighbors during the Colonial and post Revolutionary War eras.²

2 Ibid.; Heads of Families, First Census of the United States, 1790, South Carolina, 9. The returns for Spartanburg county credits the county with a population of 8800. Of this number 866 were slaves.

Upper South Carolina remained unpopulated save for the Cherokee Indians until 1736. In that year Colonel Elijah Clark, a citizen of Pennsylvania, settled on the Pacolet River in the territory that was later to become Spartanburg county. With the course of six years several families joined him. These settlers constituted the entire white population of the region prior to 1755.³

3 Landrum, Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina, 21.

Clark and his followers entered the region from the north by way of North Carolina. The Cherokees held much of the intermediate territory between them and the coast settlements, and this fact accounts for the designation of the northwest portion of the state as Upper South Carolina.⁴

4 Ibid.

Colonel Clark's settlement remained as an outpost of civilization until 1750. After that date numerous pioneers made prospecting trips into the new land. Satisfied

with the possibilities of the high country, they returned home. These same prospectors became actors in the drama known in American history as the Westward Movement. The decade from 1755 to 1765 witnessed a number of small settlements on the Pacolet and Tyger Rivers, and on Long Cane and Thickety Creeks. The new settlers came from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. They were a restless group. Inured to the hard life of the frontier and somehow strongly imbued with the spirit of adventure, they possessed the new land. These same settlers rarely remained permanently. "They were of a roving disposition and preferred to keep well in the van of civilization. When they began to be elbowed by their neighbors, they broke camp and followed the retreating deer and buffalo into the wilds to the westward."⁵

5 William Shaper, Sectionalism in South Carolina, 277.

Immediately following the American Revolution, emigrants came into Upper South Carolina rapidly. The influx followed a somewhat haphazard fashion. In some instances a small group formed a settlement. In other instances an entire neighborhood in Pennsylvania or Virginia transplanted itself into the new region. The frontiersmen were practically all poor whites. A team of horses or a yoke of oxen, a few cattle, hogs, and poultry, a supply of seed for planting, a meager supply of farm tools and

implements, along with the rudest sort of household furnishings, comprised the worldly belongings which they brought with them.⁶

⁶ Ibid., 317-318.

Each family selected a small farm and raised and fabricated what it could. Each family was largely self-supporting. Cotton, which was raised in limited quantities, was spun and woven in the homes. Gunsmiths, blacksmiths, hatters, tanners, and millers supplied what the frontier neighborhoods demanded by their individual activities. Saw mills furnished rough lumber for farm homes, barns, and fences, while numerous stills- there were a hundred and eighty-three in Spartanburg county in 1810- produced the supply of liquor.⁷

⁷ American Manufactures, Third Census of the United States, 1810, pages not numbered.

Intense religious activity pervaded the whole of Upper Carolina from the period following the Revolutionary War. Presbyterians and Methodists had many adherents among the early settlers, but the Baptists outnumbered both of these groups.⁸ This fact is explained by the presence of

⁸ Landrum, History of Spartanburg County South Carolina, 21.

Shubal Stearnes and Daniel Marshall in North Carolina. These men, they were brothers-in-law, left New England and made their way into North Carolina about the middle of the eighteenth century. Both had come under the influence of George Whitfield during the Great Revival. Both had embraced the doctrine of believers' baptism, and both had united with Baptist churches. Settling in Randolph county, North Carolina, on the route traversed by emigrants into Upper South Carolina, these men were veritable evangelists for the Baptist faith. They conducted camp meetings on the main line of travel and touched the emigrants as they passed. They organized a Baptist church at Little River, North Carolina, in 1760, with five members. This church grew to more than five hundred members within the space of three years. By 1775 the influence of these preachers had spread as far south as Georgia and eastward to the sea.⁹

9 Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 294.

Manifesting the same zeal as Stearnes and Marshall, their converts moved on into Spartanburg county, South Carolina. Camp meetings were the regular order of life during the summer months. Such meetings lasted for weeks. Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian ministers took their turn in the pulpit. On occasions one denomination would sponsor the meeting for a week or more, whereupon another

10

would then resume where the first had left off.

10 Landrum, History of Spartanburg County South Carolina, 26.

The spirit of religious fervor in these meetings was extraordinary. This was especially true during the first few years of the nineteenth century. The Great Revival in the West began in Kentucky in 1799. The spirit of revival lasted for about six years. The revival spread from Kentucky into Tennessee the first year, and later into the other Southern states east of the mountains. Excessive religious behavior was common. So great was the spiritual influence among the people that their physical behavior became pronounced. One particular physical reaction was so unusual that it became known as the "jerks." In such cases the person was seized with a contortive movement of the body in which the head rocked steadily from side to side or from a frontal to a backward position. This often kept up for hours, the person finally falling in complete exhaustion. ¹¹ One traveler from Canada, upon

11 James. Ross, The Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross, 233-240.

visiting a camp-meeting ground in northern Tennessee, observed that a grove of young pines adjacent to the meeting-grounds had been topped some four or five feet above the ground. Inquiring the reason for this condition, he learned that persons seized with the "jerks" were led by

their friends to the pine stumps in order that they might¹²
held to them during the interval of the seizure.

¹² Baptist Memorial and Monthly Chronicle, November, 1843.

Another physical form of agitation was that of swooning. In this instance the sinner, becoming conscious of great guilt, fell in a faint. Often he remained thus for many hours. Still other forms of behavior were characterized by laughing, singing, dancing, or running. Although the more excessive forms of the "jerks", dancing, and running passed into disuse after about three years, swoon-¹³
ing, singing, and laughing remained for many years.

¹³ Ross, The Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross, 233-240.

Byars Family History

Into this South Carolina frontier, with its primitive setting and the intense struggle of its new citizenry with its primitiveness, came various members of the Byars family during the period immediately following the Revolution. In this same South Carolina region, no longer the frontier, was born Noah Turner Byars on May 17, 1808.

The family name of Byars is of English origin. Originally, the spelling was Byers. There are two possible origins of the word. In one we have the possibility of

dialect topography. "Bere" is the west English country name for a wood. Early English custom associated the Christian name with some familiar object. Thus Elias de la bere meant Elias of the wood. There is a strong argument for the possible derivation of the name from bere. On the other hand, there is the contention that the name comes from a survival of the preposition "by." By, in old English usage, was joined to the word following to designate certain geographical and topographical features. The earliest forms of by added an "e." Bye was often used to designate a house or a homestead. From any number of combinations we get the words

14

Byas, Byers, Byars, and Bias.

14 Ernest Weekly, Surnames, 52. The Byarses of South Carolina very seldom, if ever, sounded the "r" in the name. They chose to pronounce the name Bias. Documents of record in the probate court of Spartanburg county and in the deed files, as well, bear the name as Byar, Byars, Bias, Bies, Bize, Bise, and Buise. "Last Will and Testament of William Byars," in Probate Record, Spartanburg county, South Carolina.

Just when the family first appears in English history we do not know. One branch of the family emigrated to Ireland. We are again faced with the uncertainty of dates. John Byars lived in Clough, Ireland, in 1717, and was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian

15

Church there. He owned an estate called Brook Hall.

15 L.P. Summers to Havins, September 21, 1936, in
Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

There is a possibility that the family had been in Ireland for a long time previous to the appearance of John Byars. Certain members of the American branch of the family claim a Scotch-Irish descent and boast a coat-of-arms consisting of a shield on which is perched a game-cock with the Latin phrase "Marte Suo Tutus" forming a fringe for the shield. Translated freely, the phrase means "Safe with his own spurs."¹⁶

16 J.Cloyd Byars to Havins, June 17, 1937, in
Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

We have reasons to believe that John Byars of Clough, Ireland, or some member of his family emigrated to Virginia early in the eighteenth century. Another John Byars was born in Louisa, Virginia, on May 16, 1734. This John Byars married Elizabeth Thomason on December 23, 1754. This couple reared fourteen children, the youngest of whom was William Byars. William Byars settled in Washington county, Virginia, shortly after the Revolution. He became wealthy and built a magnificent country home which he called Brook Hall. From this we infer that William Byars was a direct descendant of John Byars of Clough, Ireland. In his later years William Byars aided

in the founding of Emory and Henry College in Virginia. He provided the funds for the erection of one of the build-
 ings which is named Byars Hall.¹⁷

 17 Ibid.

Different members of the family were active in Virginia and in North Carolina during the Revolution. John Byars of Louisa, Virginia, raised a company of soldiers in his county and commanded the company, with the rank
 18
 of a captain. Nathan Byars was born in Granville

 18 Malcom H. Harris, A History of Louisa County, Virginia, 63-67.

county, North Carolina, in 1749. He entered the Continental Army from Caswell county, North Carolina, as a private in
 19
 Captain Cunningham's company. After the war he moved to

 19 The State Records of North Carolina, XXII, 174.

Rutherford county, North Carolina. Later he was a resident of Spartanburg county, South Carolina, and died there on August 18, 1846, at the age of ninety-seven
 20
 years.

 20 Will F. Franke to Havins, August 15, 1939, in Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

Two other members of the family in Virginia make a ghost-like appearance and then vanish. We find John Byars purchasing a hundred and ninety-seven acres of land from Isaac Rosmar in September, 1797. This land was situated on the Middle Fork of the Holston River. On November 1, 1798, Silas Byars married Mary Hollet in Washington²¹ county, Virginia. Both men lived in Southwest Virginia.

21 L.P. Summers, Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1258, 1335.

Uncertainty shrouds the date of the coming of the first members of the family into Spartanburg county, South Carolina. Elijah Byars acquired a two hundred acre tract of land on Thickety Creek in the county from Governor Thomas Pinkney for the sum of twenty pounds sterling on May 24, 1733. This was three years before Colonel Clark²² made the first settlement in the county. Whether or

22 Deed Records, Spartanburg County, Book F, 269.

not Elijah Byars ever lived in the region we do not know. His son, John Byars, was a resident of the county in²³ February, 1786. Again, there was David Byars with a wife,

23 Ibid., Book B, 165.

one son, and two daughters in the county in 1790. Two William Byarses were found by the enumerators of the first federal census in 1790. One of these men had a family consisting of a wife, two sons, and four daughters. The other had a wife, one son, and two daughters.

 24 Heads of Families, First Census of the United States, 1790, South Carolina, 30.

There was a William Byars living on Thickety Creek in 1799. We should like to believe that he was the father of Noah Turner Byars. The circumstance of dates, however, leads us to believe that he was not the father of Noah Turner Byars. This William Byars had a wife, named Sarah, nine sons, and one daughter. He owned about five hundred acres of land on Thickety Creek. Two hundred acres of this land came into his possession by purchase from William Safford on February 3, 1779. This William Byars seems to have been a man of some substance. He owned a mill, numerous livestock, and a considerable amount of his land was cultivated. That he was of religious temperament is manifested in the names of his sons. Each bore a Biblical name. He does not appear to have been one of the William Byarses accounted for in the federal census of 1790, since the size of his family does not correspond with the families of the two Williams listed in the census report.

One of the sons was named Noah. William Byars' will

was drawn on February 5, 1799. The will was presented for probate in 1819. Noah Turner Byars was born May 17, 1808, which was nine years after the will was drawn. The original copy bears no interlineations which might indicate that the name, Noah, was inserted after the will was drawn. Again, we know that the father of Noah Turner Byars was living in 1824. William Byars was an illiterate man. Noah Turner Byars' father was by no means illiterate, but was accounted a somewhat authoritative Biblical scholar. These facts eliminate William Byars as the father
 25
 of Noah Turner Byars. Five of the sons of William Byars

25 "Last Will and Testament of William Byars," in Probate Records, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Box 3, Package 13. Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884. Deed Records, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Book F, 258. Noah Byars, the son of William Byars, is nowhere mentioned in the settlement of the estate of his father. He shared equally with his brothers under the terms of the will. The Deed Records of Spartanburg county make no mention of a Noah Byars until the year 1884.

left wills, and none of these mentions a Noah Byars. The remaining sons died intestate, and an examination of the deed records of the county throws no light on the parentage of Noah Turner Byars. That he was closely related to William Byars is, without doubt, true. This is borne out in the similarity of the wills of the two men. Noah T. Byars made his will in 1877. This instrument is almost identical in wording to that of the will of William

26

Byars, which was drawn in 1799.

26 Ibid.; "Last Will and Testament of Noah T. Byars,"
in Probate Records, Brown County, Texas.

Several other members of the family, any one of whom
might have been the father of Noah T. Byars, lived in
Spartanburg county at the opening of the nineteenth cen-
tury. James Byars was living on Broad River in 1793. ²⁷

27 Dead Records, Spartanburg County, South Carolina,
Book G, 346.

Another Nathan than the one of Revolutionary fame lived
on Mike's Creek in 1810, and was the father of one son
and one daughter. Joseph Byars was farming on Green River
in 1810. His family consisted of a wife, three sons, and
six daughters. ²⁸

28 J.E. Willoughby to Havins, January 29, 1938, in
Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

The different families of Byarses living in Spartan-
burg county at the opening of the nineteenth century owned
land along the waters of Green River and its tributaries,
some sixteen miles northeast of the city of Spartanburg. ²⁹

29 Walter B. Miller to Havins, September 4, 1939, in
Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

Noah T. Byars was born on a farm. There is nothing to indicate that his early life was different that of other farm children. Like other farm boys he soon learned the work connected with rural life. Early day agricultural life in America was largely self-sustaining. Fathers taught their sons to do skilled labor in those fields where skilled labor was necessary in carrying on the farm enterprise. Game was plentiful, and firearms were primitive and had to be kept in repair. Horses had to be shod. Oxen needed yokes. Farm tools were made and mended in the farmer's blacksmith shop. Like other farmers in South Carolina, the father of Noah T. Byars taught his son, and the son became a combination gunsmith and blacksmith.³⁰

³⁰ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

The home life in Byars' family was religious. Family worship, in which the father gathered the household together, read the Bible, sang hymns, and prayed, was common in many homes. Byars himself asserted that he "was brought up around a family altar." This religious atmosphere, doubtless, had much to do with directing him to the church, and later to the ministry.

In his formative years Byars was given to introspection. Between the ages of twelve and sixteen he had many misgivings about his own spiritual welfare. The doctrine of total depravity, which he knew in his Baptist home and heard preached in the Baptist church of which his parents were members, must have greatly influenced his

thinking. He has left us a vivid description of his conversion. In the summer of 1824 two Baptist preachers were holding a revival meeting in the community in which he lived. On a certain day a number of young people notified him and his older brother of their intentions of spending the night in the Byars home. The two brothers made plans for entertaining their visitors with a social hour after their return from religious services in the church.

When the night arrived, the young people returned home with the two brothers, and, much to the chagrin of all the young people, there were two additional visitors. The father of Byars invited the two Baptist ministers to spend the night in his home. This invitation altered the plans of the younger group for a social hour. Arriving at home about ten o'clock in the evening, Byars' father passed a Bible to one of the ministers, observing that they should not overlook the opportunity of so large a group of young people. The minister had no notion of wasting an opportunity, and forthwith preached them a sermon on the terribleness of sin and the doom of the sinner. The entire group was serious. After the sermon the minister called penitents. Byars and his brother were greatly agitated. Both of them fell in swoons and remained unconscious until near daybreak. Byars himself tells us that he awoke the next morning in a cornfield some distance from the house. He seems to have labored under a

sense of great guilt for several hours. During the morning his sense of guilt passed, and an abiding peace came to him. His brother was likewise converted the same day.³¹

31 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

From the day of his conversion Byars had an impression that the ministry was to be his field of labor. He was, however, unable to reconcile his impression with the material facts of his life. He had had, up to this time, the poorest of educational advantages. His social contacts had been those of the frontier, and they had been meager. His voice was not strong. He was shy, self-conscious, and diffident. Exhibiting such characteristics, we do not wonder that he wavered a long time before making up his mind.

Byars remained in South Carolina seven years after his conversion. Finally, he became so agitated over the impression that he should become a preacher that he decided to attempt to run away from the inner urge. He left Spartanburg county in 1831, and went to Georgia. We do not know in what part of Georgia he resided. He made no indication of his residence. If he ever disclosed the place to his contemporaries, they failed to record it. In his adopted state he worked as a blacksmith. But the sounding anvil instead of drowning out the urge to the ministry only accentuated it. During the four years

he remained in Georgia, he came gradually to the conclusion that he must preach if he expected to discover any peace of mind. Late in 1834 he became convinced that in the new country of Texas he might find a people who would hear him preach with gladness. Following this conviction, he started for Texas in January, 1835. Of his journey he left no record. He reached Washington-on-the-Brazos in April, 1835.

32 Ibid.

CHAPTER III

Byars in Texas

Washington-on-the-Brazos

Moses Austin, a citizen of Missouri, received permission of the Spanish authorities to introduce Anglo-American colonists into Texas in January, 1821.¹ Upon

¹ Record of Moses Austin and Family, 1735-1836, in Barker, (ed.), The Austin Papers, I, 3.

his return to Missouri from Texas he died, and his son, Stephen F. Austin succeeded in having his father's contract transferred to himself.² After a period of

² Ibid., 4-5.

preparation, Austin began a systematic campaign of advertising in the United States, seeking to interest colonists in the states in his venture in the new country. His campaign succeeded, and colonists came in relatively large numbers. The absence of railroad transportation into Texas made the journey by land slow and tedious. Entering the state on the east, the new citizens followed the main line of travel, which was known as the San Antonio Road, to Austin's colony on the lower Brazos and Colorado

Rivers. ³ The Spanish had opened this thoroughfare in

3 Ibid., 4.

the early eighteenth century as a line of communication between their missions at San Antonio and those in the region of Nacogdoches and San Augustine. The road ran in a fairly southwest course from Nacogdoches, crossing the Brazos about one hundred and fifty miles by airline above its mouth. ⁴ Converging with this main highway at

4 Austin's Map of Texas in E. C. Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin, 52.

the crossing on the Brazos, was the road northward from Galveston and the settlements west of the Trinity River. ⁵

5 E. W. Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, Texas Historical Association X, 150. Subsequently cited as The Quarterly; Mrs. J. K. Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, 40.

So well known was the line of travel that the great bulk of the settlers entering Texas in the early years of settlement made their way over its lonely stretches. Several important towns were to be found along the road, among which were Nacogdoches and Gonzales.

A second route, known as the Atascosito Road, emanated from Nacogdoches and ran southwestward to La Bahia and Laredo. This road crossed the Brazos at Washington.⁶ Surmounting the Brazos on the west side

6 General Topographic Map of The State of Texas, 1937.

at the crossing of the Atascosito Road is a relatively high bluff. Here on December 17, 1833, John Wesley Kenney built the first log cabin on the site of the future town of Washington.⁷ The land was the original property of

7 C.W.Ramsdell, "Martin McHenry Kenney," in The Quarterly, X, 341.

Andrew Robinson. He deeded six hundred and forty acres to his son-in-law, John W. Hall, in 1824. Nine years later Hall bought the remainder of Robinson's holdings and organized the Washington Company. He had the townsite surveyed into streets and lots and at the same time built a ferry boat on the river which served the traveling public for sixty years.⁸ Ac-

8 Wallis, Sixty Years of the Brazos, 11-12.

cording to Aea Hoxey, President of the Washington Company,

in communicating with the commissioners to locate the seat of the government on November 15, 1837, "Washington was laid out as a town in the spring of 1835." ⁹

⁹ E. W. Winkler (ed.), "Documents Relating to the Organization of the Municipality of Washington, Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 96.

Occurrences in July, 1835, pointed to an early influx of population into the new town. On July 2, 1835, seventy-five citizens of Washington forwarded a petition to James B. Miller, political chief of the Department of the Brazos, at San Felipe, asking that the organization of the town be established, and that it be granted an ayuntamiento. Miller permitted a provisional organization and reported his action to Wyly Martin, his successor in office. By the latter part of July the ayuntamiento was exercising authority and the town had its full quota of officers. ¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., 96-100.

Three contemporaries have each left a somewhat minute description of the town. W. P. Zuber, a member of a company of soldiers of the Texas army, was in Washington in March, 1836, and remembered the town thus:

Arrived at the Brazos River, we ferried to the west side; cross [ed] a low bottom less than a hundred yards wide; and ascended a tall steep hill. Now we were at the edge of the town. There were only three good houses in it. All frames, and all in a row on the South side of Main Street; first, John Lott's hotel, the first from the river; second, one built for a commercial house in which the convention was sittin; and third, S. R. Roberts' hotel. Besides these, there were only a few pole cabins. But what a beautiful site for a town! A beautiful inclined plain, gently rising, and extending westward more than half a mile; and crowned with an open forest of splendid shade trees. 11

11 W. P. Zuber, Eighty Years in Texas, MS., in Archives, State Library, Austin.

In contrast to Zuber, Colonel William Gray, a Virginia gentleman who was prospecting in Texas in the early months of 1836, saw the town in a different light. Visiting Washington the first time in February, 1836, his experience in the way of accomodations gave him a jaundiced view.

We slept at a house, called a tavern, kept by a man named Lot, which was the only place in the city at which we could get fodder for our horses. It was a frame house, consisting of only one room, about forty by twenty feet, with a large fire place at each end, a shed at the back in which the table was spread. It was a frame house covered with clapboards, a wretchedly made establishment... The host's wife and children and about thirty lodgers, all slept in the same apartment, some in beds, some on cots, but the greater part on the floor. The supper consisted of fried pork and coarse corn bread and miserable coffee. 12

12 William Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 108.

Not only was Gray critical of the accommodations but also of the people. He observed in the town, "a blackguard, rowdy set, lounging around." 13 The entire surroundings

13 Ibid., 108-115.

irked him. Commenting on the physical appearances he observed:

Glad to get out of so disgusting a place. It is laid out in the woods; about a dozen wretched cabins or shanties constitute the city; not one decent house in it, and only one well-defined street, which consists of an opening cut in the woods. The stumps are still standing. A rare place to hold a national convention in. They will have to leave the place promptly to avoid starvation. 14

14 William Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 108-121.

Another observer of the same scenes estimated the population of the town at about two hundred fifty persons, "about equally divided between a fixed population and a floating one. The floaters were mostly gamblers, horse-racers, and sports of all classes." 15

15 Mrs. J. C. Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, 40-41.

To this new town of Washington came Noah T. Byars in April, 1835. Seeking to escape an emotional urge that he should become a Baptist minister, he purchased a lot from John W. Hall, and opened a gunsmith's shop in a building on the south side of Main Street between the two hotels kept by John Lott and S. R. Roberts; here he plied his trade; and a lucrative trade it was, for he employed a journeyman and an apprentice; and here he became an actor in the drama that was just beginning to unfold itself. ¹⁶

¹⁶ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884. Deed Records, Washington County, Vol. A, 360. N. T. Byars to Legislature, December 20, 1849, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library Austin.

Political Disturbances

With the seizure of authority in Mexico by General Santa Anna in May, 1834, public opinion in Texas grew tense. ¹⁷ The Mexican Congress, in March, 1835, reduced

¹⁷ E. C. Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin, 473.

the militia to one man for every five hundred inhabitants. A little later the Congress arrogated to itself the power to change the constitution of 1824 in such ways as it felt were necessary for the good of the nation. The

tariff act of 1832 became operative again. By July the Texans felt that the country was in danger. ¹⁸ Austin

¹⁸ Ibid. 474-475.

was in Mexico at this time, and opinion in Texas was divided. Heretofore there had been a decided divergence of opinion in Texas with reference to events in Mexico. One group counseled peace. A small, but vociferous minority wanted armed resistance. Austin had felt all along that moderation would best serve the interests of Texas. With his return from Mexico in September, 1835, Austin came out unequivocally for war. All parties were now united. ¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 480-481.

Fresh from Georgia, Noah T. Byars, though perhaps without great influence, was militant. He was only twenty-seven years of age. The impetuosity of youth was in his blood. Inured to a life of hardships on the frontier in his native South Carolina, he had no inclination to wait on events. Santa Anna's boast to the French and British ministers that he would "sweep all before him", and his orders of December 7, 1835, to General

Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma that "foreigners who are making war against the Mexican nation, violating all laws, are not deserving of any consideration, and for that reason no quarter will be given them... They have with audacity, declared a war of extermination to the Mexicans, and they should be treated the same way," ²⁰ aroused Byars to

20 U. D. Filizola, Correspondence of Santa Anna During the Texas Campaign, 1835-1836, Translated With Introduction and Notes, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1939, p. 16-17; 33.

write a bit of doggerel which expressed his sentiments.

BOYS RUB YOUR STEEL

Boys, rub your steel, and pick your flints,
 Methinks I hear some friendly hints
 That we from Texas shall be driven -
 Our lands to Spanish soldiers given,
 To arms, to arms, to arms!

Then Santa Anna soon shall know
 Where all his martial law shall go
 It shall not in the Sabine flow
 Nor line the banks of the Colorado,
 To arms, to arms, to arms!

Instead of that he shall take his stand
 Beyond the banks of the Rio Grande;
 His martial law we will put down,
 We'll live at home and live in town,
 Huzza, huzza, huzza! ²¹

21 Baker, A Texas Scrapbook, Reprint Edition, 440.

Following the disturbances in Mexico during the spring and summer of 1835, the jurisdiction of Columbia appointed a "Committee of Safety and Correspondence," which group published an address to every municipality in Texas, calling upon them to elect delegates to meet in a consultation at Washington on October 15, 1835. 22

22 H. Yoakum, History of Texas, Reprint Edition, I, 354-355.

Meanwhile Stephen F. Austin had returned from his imprisonment in Mexico and had assumed the leadership in Texas. "A public meeting in San Felipe made him a member of the local committee of correspondence on September 12; and thereafter, by common consent, the direction of events passed definitely to him!" The committee at San Felipe was active. A circular letter from this group urged the prompt election of delegates to the proposed consultation, and also defined "its conception of the functions of the consultation." 23

23 Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin, 480.

Austin left the work of organizing resistance to other hands. On October 8 he proceeded to Gonzales and took command of the troops with the purpose of repulsing

the Mexican Army under Cos then marching on San Antonio. Five members from Liberty and Matagorda reached San Felipe and on October 11 organized the Permanent Council. R. R. Royal became the president and C. B. Stewart was appointed secretary. 24

24 E. G. Barker, "Journal of the Permanent Council (October 11-27, 1835)," in The Quarterly, VII, 251.

Urged by several appeals, the municipalities elected delegates to meet in mid-October. Some of the delegates repaired to Washington, and some met in San Felipe. Since no quorum was present, the San Felipe group decided to postpone the meeting until November 1, 1835. Again there were meetings in both Washington and San Felipe. Several of the delegates from Washington, realizing that the exigencies of the political situation demanded unity of action, joined the delegates in San Felipe. 25

25 E. W. Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 145-147.

The delegates organized themselves into a consultation November 3, 1835, and took for their chief task the framing of a declaration setting forth their reasons for taking up arms and also the setting up of a provisional government

for Texas. The declaration was the order of business for November 7, and it

stated that the people of Texas had armed in defense of their rights and liberties, which were threatened by the encroachments of military despots, and in defense of the republican principles of the Federal Constitution of Mexico of 1824. ²⁶

26 Kennedy, Texas, 493.

Six days later, on November 13, the plan for a provisional government came up for consideration. The proposed government was to consist of a governor, a lieutenant-governor, and a council. The members of the council were to be chosen by the consultation, one member from each municipality, and the council thus chosen had the responsibility of electing the governor and the lieutenant-governor. ²⁷

27 Ibid., 873-882.

Trouble was imminent for the provisional government from the beginning. An army had to be recruited and provisioned. The state was without funds or credit abroad. Among other things, the problem of fixing a permanent seat of the government occupied the attention of the governor and council. On November 17, the council selected Washington as the capital. Governor Henry Smith vetoed

the measure on the grounds that Washington possessed no printing facilities, so essential to the work of the government, and added: "I am not apprised that your body has made the necessary arrangements for our comfortable location at Washington." ²⁸ The seat of the government

²⁸ E. W. Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 148-149.

remained at San Felipe and the breach between the governor and council widened, culminating on January 11, 1836, in the removal of Governor Smith by the council and the installation of Lieutenant-Governor Robinson. The governor now issued a proclamation dissolving the council and retained possession of the archives; and, at the same time, continued to exercise the functions of his office. Meanwhile the council recognized Robinson. Finally, on February 16, the council passed a resolution:

That the Council adjourn to meet at the town of Washington on the twenty-second of this month, and that the acting Governor and other officers connected with the Provisional Government be notified of the fact and requested to remove their offices to that place. ²⁹

²⁹ Ibid., 151.

The apprehensions of Governor Smith in December, 1835, in vetoing the measure providing for the removal of the seat of government seem to have been well founded. There were no adequate accommodations in Washington. No office building was available. The town had no newspaper or printing press, and lodging accommodations were poor. When the council repaired to that place on February 16, a quorum failed to materialize. The same conditions existed on February 22. ³⁰ Just what action the council

³⁰ Ibid., 151.

took to remedy the situation is not clear. The members as an official body took no action whatever, but it appears that the individual members of the council made a contract with Noah T. Byars for the rental of his building in Washington for the use of the forthcoming convention which was to meet March 1. ³¹

³¹ Byars to State Legislature, December 20, 1849, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin. While a resident of Naylor City, in December, 1849, Byars petitioned the Legislature for compensation for the rental of his building, stating: "Your petitioner would Respectfully represent to Your Honorable body that in the early part of 1836 he Rented a House to the Provisional Government of Texas for the term of 3 months at \$56.00 fifty six dollars per month, for the use of the Convention at the time our declaration of Independence was Made: and you petitioner would further represent that he once applied to the Government of Texas for his pay and they referred him to the Individuals that rented

the house [;] accordingly he brought suit against those individuals, but some being dead and some moved away he never has obtained one cent!" No records of the suits which Byars filed could be found, hence we are at a loss to know which members of the council made the verbal agreement with Byars.

The Convention

That the delegates accepted the arrangements between the council and Byars is patent, for March 1 found them in Washington and opening their first plenary session in Byars' shop. ³² The building blended well with its

32 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

frontier environment:

The house in which they sat was a two-story frame; but they occupied only the first floor. It fronted on the south side of Main Street, about twenty feet, and extended about forty feet. It had two doors; one in the middle of the front end; the other in the east side, near the southeast corner, the latter being closed. ³³

33 Zuber, Eighty Years in Texas, 188.

Another contemporary described the building somewhat more in detail:

It was a one-story house with the gable toward the street, and situated immediately on the street with a double door in the center of the end opening on the street with one or two steps leading into it;

there was one window on the left of the door in front; on the north side were some four or five small windows; none of the windows had glass in them, but were closed by wooden shutters; on the end or back of the house was a single door, with perhaps one window. The house was about 25 feet in width by 50 feet in length, was an ordinary frame weatherboard with common clapboards split with a fro and smo(o)thed with a drawing knife... It was not ceiled, but was covered with two foot roof bo(a)rds. ³⁴

34 Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, 87.

Still another observer saw it as, "An unfurnished house without doors or windows. In lieu of glass cotton cloth was stretched across the windows, which partially excluded the cold wind." ³⁵

35 Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 121.

The last two days of February were rainy. March 1 found the temperature one degree above the freezing point, ³⁶

36 Ibid., 120.

but the delegates refused to have their ardor dampened by rain or chilled by a Texas norther. The convention met promptly on the morning of March 1, and set itself to the task of providing a stable government. The delegates

chose Richard Ellis president and H. S. Kimble secretary. That public opinion in Texas in favor of a declaration of independence had crystallized in the weeks preceding the convention was attested in the adoption, without debate, of a motion by George C. Childress, a delegate from Milam district, that a committee of five be appointed "to draft a declaration of independence from Mexico." 37

37 "Proceedings of the Convention at Washington," in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 825, 834-837.

Childress as chairman of the committee, along with James Gaines, Edwin Conrad, Collin McKinney, and Bailey Hardeman, was ready to report the next day, and the declaration was adopted, March 2, 1836. 38

38 J. K. Greer, "The Committee on the Texas Declaration of Independence," in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXI, 130-149.

In the meantime, the convention, without inquiring into the quarrel between Governor Smith and the council, ordered all officers of the Provisional Government to surrender all books, papers, correspondence, and journals. 39

39 W. Roy Smith, "The Quarrel Between Governor Smith and the Council of the Provisional Government of the Republic," in The Quarterly, V, 337; "Proceedings of the General Council," in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 808.

With this action of the Convention the Provisional Government passed out of existence, and a new ad interim government for the Republic of Texas took its place a few days later. Notwithstanding the fact that a quorum of the council was not present in Washington ⁴⁰ and

40 "Proceedings of the General Council of Texas," in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 798-808.

had not been present since January 18, another transaction of the body respecting Noah T. Byars seems to have been recognized as perfectly legal, not only by the ad interim government but also by the government of the Republic of Texas which superseded it after the adoption of the constitution. Santa Anna's march into Texas made the raising of an army of resistance an absolute necessity. Muzzle-loading rifles were the weapons with which the Texans hoped to repel the Mexicans. Every rifle counted. If they were not in good repair, they were useless. Byars was a gunsmith, and indispensable to the army in the present emergency. The minority of the council in Washington in February, 1836, appointed him armorer to the forces then in the service of Texas. No agreement seems to have been made touching the

matter of remuneration. Evidently Byars did not suggest the matter. He was patriotic. He was a witness to the stirring scenes in Washington. Speaking of his actions a year later he said:

And in order to serve his country to the full extent of his ability he left his journeyman and one apprentice in his shop in Washington, he paying their board himself at the tavern, and instructing them to work on the arms of every person going to the field without charge while your petitioner repaired himself to the field and performed the services of Armorer there until his health failed him so much that he was compelled to return but still carried on his shop in Washington until he had repaired the rise of 500 stands of arms. 41

41 Byars to State Legislature in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Subsequently, on two different occasions, Byars sought compensation from the government without success. Never having been an enlisted man in the army, he directed his efforts at securing his pay toward the lawmaking branch. Early in December, 1837, he petitioned the Congress then in session at Houston "to make such remunerations to him as in your wisdom you may think proper." 42

42 Byars to the Congress, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin. Byars' petition was written in the third person.

The committee on Claims and Accounts received the petition December 7, 1837, and reported a bill favorably December 14, proposing to pay him a soldier's wages and twenty cents a day additional for his month's services. ⁴³

43 Ibid.

Since privates in the army received only six dollars a month, ⁴⁴ Byars felt that the proposal was inadequate

44 Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 925-926, American State Papers, Class V, Military Affairs VI, 164-168. Byars to Legislature, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

and requested the committee not to offer the bill. The committee acceded to the request. Twelve years later, in December, 1849, he petitioned the legislature for payment of the claim and asked that the remuneration be fixed at two hundred fifty dollars or six hundred forty acres of land. On this occasion the committee refused to report a bill and referred the matter back to the House because they found "No voucher or anything in the way of evidence to support said petitions." The matter became the order of business of the House of Representatives for January 23, 1850. The committee's report was adopted February 6, 1850, and tabled the same day. ⁴⁵

45 Byars to Legislature, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Continuing its work, the Convention made history. The delegates worked assiduously during those March days. Seated around a rough board table which extended almost from one end of the room to the other, ⁴⁶ they gave

46 R. N. Richardson, "Framing the Constitution of the Republic of Texas," in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXI, 192.

themselves to the task of setting up a framework of government for Texas. A committee to frame a constitution set to work on March 2, and on March 9 they reported with the first draft of the proposed instrument. ⁴⁷

47 Ibid., 193. "Journals of the Convention," in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 824.

Meanwhile, rumors of the imminent danger of the handful of men under Travis in San Antonio and of Fannin's troops farther eastward reached Washington. If the Alamo were lost and Fannin's men were beaten, then the way would be open for an unopposed march eastward by the Mexican army. This the delegates realized. ⁴⁸ Still they refused to

 48 Ibid., 208-209.

give up the work in hand. Finally, on March 15, came
 "a letter from Genl. Sam Houston, announcing the fall
 of the Alamo!" 49 This letter caused great confusion

49 "Proceedings of the Convention at Washington,"
 in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 900.

in the convention. Some of the delegates left for their
 homes. Those remaining worked feverishly all night. At
 four o'clock on the morning of March 17, they set up the
ad interim government and administered the oath of office
 to the incoming provisional president and other officers. 50

50 R. N. Richardson, "Framing the Constitution of
 the Republic of Texas," in Southwestern Historical Quarter-
ly, XXI, 208-209. The three o'clock meeting on March 16,
 found only twenty-eight members present.

Article 3 of the General Provisions of the constitution
 dealt with the seat of government. It read:

The president and heads of the departments shall keep
 their offices at the seat of the government, unless
 removed by the permission of Congress, or unless in
 case of emergency in time of war, the public interest
 may require their removal.

No mention of a permanent seat of the government occurred
 in the constitution, and the assumption was that it should
 remain at Washington. But such was not to be. The same

dispatches which told of the fall of the Alamo told also of the retreat of Houston and his army from Gonzales. President Burnet exercised the authority granted him under Article 3, and issued a proclamation removing the government to Harrisburg. 51 The president's

51 E. W. Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 152.

proclamation added further to the general disorder, and the population fled. After being a little over a month in the field with the army, Byars applied to General Houston for permission to return home on account of sickness. Reaching Washington, he found the town completely deserted except for his two employees and the family of John Lott. 52

52 Ibid., 152. Byars to Legislature, in Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Political Activities

After the success of Houston's army at San Jacinto, the inhabitants of Texas who had fled so precipitately in March returned to their homes. Life for the individual citizenry assumed a normal aspect, but problems increased for the government of the young republic. The army was

one of the chief concerns of the president and his advisers. The treasury was without funds to pay the soldiers, and certain officers encouraged the men in making demands upon the government. General Santa Anna was a prisoner in the hands of the authorities. Many leaders wanted him tried as a common criminal. A few of the leaders sought to arouse sentiment in favor of an expedition against the Mexican town of Matamoros. This last was a popular theme among the officers of the army and the soldiers themselves, many of whom were volunteers from the United States. 53

53 Kennedy, Texas, 609-641.

In order to forestall the threatened expedition against Mexico and to hold the public debt at a minimum figure, the authorities instituted a plan of granting furloughs to the soldiers. 54 The greater portion

54 Dudley Wooten, History of Texas, 255.

of the soldiers thus eliminated made their way to their homes in the United States. A few remained in Texas and took up their residence in the towns, where they became a problem to the citizenry by their antisocial conduct.

The town of Washington, being centrally located and on the main line of travel across the country, attracted a sizable group who employed themselves in drinking, horse-racing, gambling, and disturbing religious worship. 55

55 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 79-87.

Washington experienced a steady growth during the first year following the war. 56 In November, 1836,

56 Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 193-197.

and again a year later efforts were made to have the seat of the government established there. The price of real estate increased, and the town prospered. 57 Noah

57 Deed Records, Washington County, Vol., A, 360. On September 18, 1837, Byers and P. M. Mercer sold a lot fifty feet by one hundred feet for \$1 000.

T. Byers returned to his shop after his brief stay in the army, 58 but his business enterprise was soon to

58 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 76.

be deserted for labor of another character. There were two reasons for the change; one political. He had made some influential friends and could better himself financially. The other reason was spiritual; the impression that he must be a preacher was greatly agitating him. ⁵⁹ The first reason held the ascendancy for a time.

59 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

During the period of his service with the army Byars met General Sam Houston and Mirabeau B. Lamar. Houston was to be the first president of Texas after the adoption of the constitution and Lamar was to be the vice-president. The first Congress of the republic passed a joint resolution, fixing the annual meetings for the body for the first Monday in November. ⁶⁰

60 Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 1335. The exact date of the resolution is not given. President Houston approved a number of measures on June 12, 1837, and apparently it was one of these, and became effective on that date.

When the Congress assembled on November 6, 1837, the friends of Byars in the Senate put him forward for sergeant-at-arms of that body and succeeded in electing him for a term of two years, ⁶¹ at a salary of five

 61 Journal of the Second Congress of Texas, 13.
Comptrollers Civil Service Records, in Archives, State
 Library, Austin.

dollars per day. 62 Again on November 11, 1839, Anson

62 Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 1130. Presumably the
 pay of the sergeants-at-arms and other employees of the
 two houses continued for the duration of the actual meet-
 ing of the Congress. The Civil List adopted December 9,
 1836, fixed their pay, but was silent on the other matter.
 In one instance the records in the comptroller's office
 indicate a yearly salary of five dollars per day. In
 another instance they indicate payment for the duration
 of Congress.

Jones, senator from Brazoria, nominated Byars for sergeant-
 at-arms, and he received a majority of the votes over two
 opponents. 63 He held the last appointment until

63 Journal of Fourth Congress of Texas, 3.

February 5, 1841. 64

64 Comptroller's Civil Service Records, in Archives,
 State Library, Austin.

The duties of the sergeant-at-arms were varied. That
 the members of the senate themselves while in session did
 not require all his time is apparent. There were only

eleven members of the body. On the other hand, their dilatory attendance upon the meetings required much of his efforts. Thus: "Services for bringing in absentee members, \$77.00." Again: "Expense for rounding up absentee members, \$52 - mileage, \$37 - expenses." The buying of necessary supplies took some of his time. On April 15, 1838, he presented an expense item of: "\$21.50, for spittoons, buckets, tumblers, and candles." On another occasion the comptroller approved an expense account for "supervising labor." ⁶⁵ In what sort of capacity Byars

65 Ibid.

acted as a supervisor of labor and the nature of the work is not indicated.

Byars moved from Washington to Bastrop early in 1838. ⁶⁶

66 "Biographical Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111.

A short time previous to this, on January 21, 1838, he had married Mrs. Sophia A. Lowden of Washington. ⁶⁷

67 Marriage License Record, Washington County, Vol., A, 360. Of Byars' wife we know very little. An examination of the Washington County records reveals nothing concerning her save the marriage. The descendants

of Byars have no information about her except that contained in a few letters which she wrote, and these throw no light on her early life nor on that of her family. Her descendants credit the story that she married her first husband in North Carolina, and that he died a short time after the marriage. Failing to agree with the family of her husband, she came to Texas with her small daughter in 1835, and stopped at Washington, where she met Byars. There is no documentary evidence to support this version.

Shortly after moving to Bastrop Byars became justice of the peace in his new home. ⁶⁸ Perhaps the fact that

68 Election Record, Bastrop County, Vol., B, 423. Byars' wife secured a position as a teacher upon their removal to Bastrop and continued as such for over a year. Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

the citizenry knew he was sergeant-at-arms of the senate influenced them in electing him, a virtual stranger among them, to public office. Again, his ownership of the convention hall in Washington might have been an element in his favor. On the other hand, he might have been the only available citizen for the place. He owned his home and some other real estate in Bastrop, ⁶⁹ and continued

69 Deed Records, Bastrop County, Vol., C, 109,274.

to reside there during the time of his service as sergeant-at-arms of the senate while the seat of the government was located in Houston. In the spring of 1839 he moved his residence from Bastrop to Travis County, settling a few

miles south of Austin in the neighborhood that was later to become the village of Webberville. Immediately afterwards he was elected one of the five justices of the peace for Travis county, and in this capacity served as associate justice of the county court. ⁷⁰ He served two successive

⁷⁰ "Biographical Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111. Telegraph and Texas Register, January 6, 1837. Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 1208-1216. The First Congress of Texas passed an act December 20, 1836, which regulated the county courts. Under this act the county court consisted of a chief justice who was elected by the two houses of Congress for a term of four years, and two associate justices chosen annually by the justices of the peace from among their own number. The court met four times each year and the remuneration of the associate justices was three dollars per day for the duration of the sittings of the court. The duties performed by the court were similar to those of our present commissioners' court.

years and received the nomination for the third term but declined the offer. ⁷¹

⁷¹ "Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111.

CHAPTER IV
 Missionary Labors
 Ordination

The frontier movement in American history was a many-sided movement. It called for many kinds of efforts among those who were the actors in the movement, and it brought forward distinct types that were representative of each activity. It produced the phlegmatic farmer, the substantial cattle baron, the romantic cowboy, the quick-shooting ranger, the intrepid stage-driver, and the patient missionary. One of the most influential of the last-mentioned group was N.T. Byars, who spent more than forty years as a missionary for the Baptists in Texas.

The life of Byars was, on the whole, unromantic. Actually it was quite prosaic. Aside from the fact that his activity was inseparably bound up with the great frontier movement, his story could be told in a few pages. Since, however, the chronicle of his activity is the chronicle of the frontier, the frontier of hardships and strenuous efforts against the forces of danger and uncertainty, his story becomes a thread in a great historical movement.

Byars left South Carolina in 1832 with a very

definite impression that he should become a Baptist preacher.¹ This impression was in no way unusual, for

1 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

Byars was a Baptist and thoroughly familiar with the Baptist belief that God reveals his will to men; and that he indicates to particular persons through their emotional natures his will that they perform a special work for him. In this manner, they believe that ministers, missionaries, and other special religious workers are called of God into their special fields of religious endeavor.²

2 Marshall, A Treatise Upon Baptist Church Jurisprudence, 390-391.

Byars had had very meager opportunities in his youth, and he was unable to understand an urge toward the pulpit in one so ill-prepared for such a place as himself.³ However much he sought to efface his

3 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

call to the ministry by secular and political activity, it remained with him, and continually became more intensified. After his removal from Bastrop to Travis county he suffered much anxiety with reference to the matter. Perhaps his misgivings were accentuated by the attitude of his wife, who was not a church member at that time and does not appear to have been sympathetic toward his struggle. Finally, in June, 1841, he resigned his place as associate justice of the County Court of Travis county and announced his intention of seeking Judge R. E. B. Baylor, who was holding court at Lagrange, and coming to a decision in the matter of entering the ministry. Upon reaching Lagrange, he found that Baylor had moved on to Columbus. Byars then sought the counsel of the Rev. T. W. Cox, who was at that time pastor of the Baptist church at Lagrange. Cox seems to have been successful in aiding him. At any rate Byars returned home and made the necessary arrangements for a revival meeting with the Macedonia Baptist Church in Travis county, of which congregation he was a member. Cox followed a few days later and did the preaching during the scheduled meeting. The revival was important in Byars' experience in two ways. In the first place, he asked the local church to grant him a license to preach, and, in the

second place, his wife became a member of the church.⁴

4 Ibid.; "Biographical Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111. Baptists hold as a point of doctrine that the church is the institution through which the gospel is propagated, and, therefore, the ministers of the church must be licensed by that body.

Byars was by now definitely committed to the work of the ministry. In order that he might enter fully into his chosen vocation, it was necessary that he be ordained. Accordingly, on October 16, 1841, his ordination service was held by the Macedonia Church, under the direction of the Rev. Z. N. Morrell and the Rev. John Woodruff as the officiating presbytery, the first such service among Baptists in Texas.⁵

5 "Biographical Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111.

This occasion naturally attracted an audience large for the times. President Lamar and several members of his cabinet were attentive spectators. A number of circumstances contributed to the general interest. Byars was favorably known. The service, moreover, with its ordination sermon, its special prayer, and the presentation of a Bible to Byars, as well as the laying on of

hands by the presbytery, was deeply impressive. Again, there was at that time a dearth of social advantages in Texas and this fact must have impelled some members of the audience to attend.⁶

6 Ibid, D. D. Tidwell, "The Ordination of N. T. Byars," in The Baptist Standard, March 18, 1937. It is significant that another Baptist ordination service was held in Washington, Texas, October 19, 1841, at which time A. Buffington was ordained. Byars and Buffington were both constituent members of the Baptist church organized by Morrell at Washington in 1837. Buffington began his ministry under the direction of the Domestic Missions Board of the Triennial Convention, See James Huckins to B. M. Hill, in Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, 164-167.

Early Ministerial Labor

Following ordination, Byars immediately accepted the pastoral duties of a Baptist church in Burleson county. Moving to the new field of labor, he entered upon his work with zest, and in less than a year had led the members of the church in the erection of a building which was credited as being the best church building in Texas at that time.⁷ He remained in

7 "Biographical Sketch of Noah T. Byars," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 106-111. This statement credited to Judge R. E. B. Baylor is questionable. It is a well-established fact that the Roman Catholic Church had a number of commodious and costly churches during the era of the Republic. Perhaps the statement should be qualified by crediting Byars with erecting the best Baptist church building in Texas in its time.

Burleson county without adequate remuneration from his church⁸ until February 13, 1845, at which time he accepted

8 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

a commission from the president of the Republic as blacksmith and armorer to the Indians at Post Number 2.⁹ He

9 Comptroller's Civil Service Papers, Archives, State Library, Austin.

served in this capacity until May 27, 1845, whereupon he resigned, "owing to the conduct of the Indians and the agents".¹⁰ Byars' statement leaves us in doubt as to

10 Ibid; Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

the actual cause of his resignation. The type of conduct of the Indians and of the agents is not indicated. It might have been his own irascibility, for he was notoriously easily provoked when opposed by others.¹¹

11 Texas Baptist Herald, November 18, 1868.

Returning from his stay among the Indians, Byars accepted an offer of the Domestic Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to represent that body in

the section between the Brazos and Trinity Rivers in Navarro county. At the same time, upon the advice of Z. N. Morrell, he consented to an appointment as notary public from President Anson Jones. Byars demurred at accepting the appointment, but Morrell reasoned that he should supplement his meager salary with the fees from his services as notary. Each objection he interposed was met by Morrell with a plausible argument and, since "the work required but one day of my time each week I finally consented."¹²

12 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

Morrell's argument in favor of acceptance of the secular activity was actuated largely by the financial condition of the Baptist ministry in Texas at that time. Many preachers were forced to make their living by other means than their religious activity. Numbers of them were farmers who gave their services on Sunday with little thought of remuneration. On the other hand, the churches were poor. Even in the case of the missionaries, such as Byars, who were commissioned by organized boards, the salaries were pitifully low.¹³ With the

13 Proceedings, Baptist State Convention, 1849, p. 14. Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 473-474.

influx of population into Central Texas and the enormous number of land sales then being made, the notarial fees were a welcome addition to Byars' earnings.¹⁴

14 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

After accepting the appointment under the Domestic Missions Board, Byars moved to Navarro City, in the central portion of Navarro county, where he resided until 1881.¹⁵ Visiting the farm homes of the people, he

15 Byars to Legislature, Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

came to know them all. He searched out the Baptists among the population and gathered them into convenient groups and organized them into churches. A contemporary writing of Byars' work said:

Elder N. T. Byars, as true and laborious a preacher as ever wielded the Jerusalem blade, vigorously prosecuted his work along the western banks of the Trinity, as far as he could find a family to listen to the story of the cross.¹⁶

16 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 277.

In the interval between May, 1845, and July, 1848, the Baptists in the region embracing Navarro, Limestone, and Leon counties had established six churches very largely

through Byars' efforts. 17

17 Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, 246.

Late in 1846 the Reverend Z. N. Morrell, having accepted appointment by the Domestic Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, began his activities east of the Brazos, and in a little while his work touched that of Byars. The efforts of the two missionaries bore fruit, and in July, 1848,

messengers from six churches- Leona, Society Hill, Springfield, Union Hill, Corsicana, and Providence- met in convention with the Providence church, Navarro county, to consider the propriety of organizing a new association. 18

18 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 277-278. Three of these churches, Society Hill, Corsicana, and Providence were located in Navarro county. Leona was in north-eastern Limestone county; Springfield was in Leon county; while Union Hill was in Southern Dallas county.

After due deliberations, the group decided to press the matter of organizing an association, even though the membership of the six churches numbered only forty people. They looked to the future.

The reasons we assign for organizing so small a body are as follows: The boundary from north to south is one hundred and fifty miles, and some of these churches could not be represented in the old association in consequence of distance; and, moreover, there are still north four churches that have not as yet been united. It is hoped that this will attract the attention of our brethren in the ministry, and that they will visit this region of the country. 19

 19 Minutes, Trinity River Association, 1848, p. 12.

Morrell and Byars were the only Missionary Baptist ministers present, and each held an office in the new association. Morrell became moderator and Byars corresponding secretary. A layman, Alexander Patrick, was the first secretary and, as such, had the responsibility of writing the minutes of the organization. However, the influence of Byars is apparent even in the minutes. The matter of attracting other ministers into the region was uppermost in his mind. We find this same appeal throughout his missionary activity of more than forty years.

With the organization of the Baptist State Convention in October, 1848, the denomination possessed an institution through which a vigorous and united missionary endeavor could be prosecuted. When the executive board of the convention met in 1849, the members decided to sponsor a paid missionary. Evidently the board considered the matter in the nature of an experiment because of the salary paid and the length of service promised. The board named Byars as their missionary and assigned him to Navarro county. He began his work in late October and labored in his field for a period of three months. During this time he preached

twenty sermons; traveled five hundred miles; and received²⁰
as compensation the sum of twenty-five dollars.

20 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, Fourth
Annual Session, 2.

Waco and the Upper Brazos

The work of Byars in Navarro county pleased the executive board, and when the convention met at Huntsville in June, 1850, a larger and more difficult field of service opened for him. At this meeting certain leaders urged the convention to appropriate seventy-five dollars per year to help sustain a missionary for a part of his time at Waco on the upper Brazos. When the matter came to the attention of the executive board, it received little sympathy. Waco was a primitive village on the extreme frontier. It was a hundred miles from the settlements on the lower Brazos. Indians roamed the region to the north and west. The prospects for successful mission work amid such surroundings were unpromising. The board showed its lack of interest. The sponsors of the request pressed their claim. They argued the strategic position of Waco. They presented statistics on the growth of population in Coryell, Bosque, McLennan, Hill, Johnson, and Tarrant counties. Finally they carried their point.

The board ordered the appropriation and assigned Noah T. Byars to the new field.²¹

21 "History of the First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 473-475.

Byars moved from Navarro county to Waco and spent several months in acquainting himself with the field. He found a few scattered Baptists in and around Waco. From the beginning of his work he indicated his intention of organizing a church in Waco. Of his efforts in this direction a member of the Waco Church wrote:

Brother Byars came to this field, and after due notice given, on May 31, 1851, met the scattered Baptists of Waco and vicinity in a Board shanty on the corner of Jackson and Second Streets. After preaching them a sermon, he organized the First Baptist Church with James C. Johnson, Noah Wood, George T. Holman, and Matilda Johnson as charter members. On the following Sabbath this little band, few in numbers and poor in purse called Brother Byars to the pastoral care of the church, which position he held until February, 1854.²²

22 Ibid., 473-475.

The newly-constituted church did not own a meeting house and was too poor to erect one. They met in a rude structure built of cedar poles with plank doors and window shutters. Byars preached in Waco one Sunday each month for a time. Toward the close of his pastorate

he preached twice each month. The three and one-half years with the Waco Church represent the longest pastorate Byars held during the period of his ministry. He was an organizer, a gatherer of scattered Baptists, and always in the vanguard. He left the work of pastoral care of the churches to other hands.

Aside from his duties as pastor of the Waco church, Byars visited the settlers along the Brazos above Waco and penetrated to the region westward along the Bosque River and the Cow House Creek. This work he did in the interest of the Baptist State Convention. ²³

 23 Texas Baptist, February 4, 1859.

After closing his work with the Waco church, Byars moved to Birdville, in Tarrant county, from which place as headquarters he carried on his work as missionary for the Baptist State Convention. ²⁴ This new field was wide

 24 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

in extent. A year after Byars began his work messengers from twelve churches in Dallas, Johnson, Tarrant, Denton, Parker, Wise, Palo Pinto, and Ellis counties organized the West Fork Baptist Association. ²⁵

25 Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, 248.

Byars does not appear to have had a part in the organization of the association; however, a year later he became moderator for the new body and served in that capacity for two successive years. 26

26 Minutes, West Fork Association, 1856, 1857.

The length of Byars' residence at Birdville is uncertain. He represented Shiloh Baptist Church of Parker county at the meeting of the West Fork Association in September, 1856. 27 As early as May 17, 1856,

27 Ibid, 1856, p. 3.

he wrote to the Texas Baptist from Castle Grove, Parker county, Texas. 28 What month and year marked his removal

28 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

are immaterial to his story, for it was his indefatigable labor that counted with him. He was intent upon his work, and his report for the second quarter of 1856 shows how assiduously he labored: "1320 miles traveled, 45 sermons,

9 lectures, 127 families visited, one church constituted and the Indian Reservation visited." 29

29 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

Proposed Indian Mission

Byars' visit to the Indian reservations on the upper Brazos aroused in him a desire for widening the efforts of his brethren in missionary endeavor. The presence of the Indians challenged him. Here was a relatively large group of aborigines without any knowledge of the story of the gospel. He knew the story, and it was his business as a missionary to pass it on to them. With this thought in mind he sought to interest the Baptist State Convention in an Indian Mission venture. In reporting to that body in 1856 he wrote:

I have just visited both the agencies. I did not see Major Neighbors, the principal agent, but learned from the agents there that he is greatly in favor of missions and schools being established among them immediately. 30

30 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1856, pp. 18-31.

Upon the occasion of his visits to the reservations, Byars had made a survey of the possible number of children of twelve years and under that would be reached by a

school, and had found two hundred ninety-nine at Fort Belknap, and near two hundred fifty at Camp Cooper. Captain Ross, the agent at Fort Balknap, was heartily in favor of establishing a school but informed Byars that the Methodists had already begun negotiations looking toward the opening of a school. Ross gave as his opinion that one school was sufficient; however, he indicated that he would not interfere if the Baptists sought to enter the agency. Of the conditions at the Comanche Agency, near Camp Cooper, Byars wrote:

Captain Baylor thinks now is the time to commence a school: and for that purpose he proposed to furnish a room and board the teacher until we can get buildings and get under headway; and when we get able, if we are disposed to pay him, well; if not, well; he will do it anyhow. I have offered to hire a teacher, and if I can find a suitable one, I shall put him right to work. There will be some eight or ten American children who will be examples for the Indians. 31

31 Ibid., 18-31.

Byars proposed to rely upon the federal government for funds with which to construct the necessary buildings for the proposed school and mission. In this he was following a precedent set by the different denominations in 1820 in answer to a proposal by President James Monroe when he offered to aid in erecting buildings and to pay the salaries of teachers in Indian mission schools. 32

32 American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 271-279. Under an act of the federal congress September 3, 1819, providing for civilizing the Indians, the government was empowered to pay two-thirds of the expense of buildings used for school purposes and the entire tuition charged, upon receipt of the proper reports. In January, 1822, the House of Representatives passed a resolution calling upon President Monroe for a statement of the expenditures made under the Act of 1819. The president referred the resolution to the Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, who reported among other things, the payment of expense items for tuition and buildings ranging from \$62.50 to \$2275 to thirty-four individuals representing Baptists, United Brethren, Methodists, Presbyterians, and the American Board for Foreign Missions.

Urging the proposed appeal for a federal subsidy, Byars continued:

The agent [Baylor] thinks we would do well to petition the government for five or ten thousand dollars to erect suitable buildings, and he has promised to recommend the measure to the Government. I shall write to General Houston on the subject, and I hope the Board will do the same. 33

33 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1856, pp. 18-31.

Houston evidently thought well of the plan. He was a member of the Baptist church at Huntsville at that time and was an attendant upon the meetings of the Baptist State Convention at its annual conferences. It became the custom of the convention from its first meeting in 1848 to appoint a committee from among the delegates to write a report for each phase of the work sponsored by

the convention. Accordingly, at the annual meeting at Huntsville, Houston and Byars constituted the committee to report on Indian Missions. Houston wrote the report, but the enthusiasm of Byars for the Indian mission proposal must have influenced his thinking. He wrote:

In the judgment of your committee the only available plan to accomplish anything with the Indians on our frontier, would be to recommend to the Government to make an appropriation to erect suitable buildings and establish schools under the supervision of such missionaries as may be appointed by your Board for that purpose and to preach in the surrounding territory to the destitute.

That this is an enterprise worthy of our prayerful consideration and our effort will appear self-evidently clear by reference to the report of our missionary last year. In that we find some five or six hundred children there at the two stations under the age of twelve years. Could these children be gathered into schools and their young and sprightly minds raised from their present channel of degradation and shame to paths of virtue and knowledge, then might their parents and their whole nation be reached by the gospel, and the glorious results eternity alone can fully develop. 34

34 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1857, p. 13.

Notwithstanding the ardor of Byars and the urging of Houston - they both spoke on the floor on the convention in favor of the report- the mission board refused to carry out their recommendations. The Baptists appeared willing to let the Methodists preempt the field
35
of Indian missions if they chose. Byars manifested

35 Ibid., 13.

his disappointment, but returned to his field hoping for a more favorable action the following year. The convention met at Independence in 1858, and again the subject of Indian missions came up for discussion. On this occasion Byars stood alone. Houston was not present. He read the report, which offered nothing new on the subject, and then proposed a resolution calling upon the churches to assist in raising the necessary funds. The convention favored the resolution, but after adjournment the board made no effort to carry out the will of the convention. ³⁶ In the meantime

36 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1858, p. 17.

the state government demanded the removal of the Indians from the two reservations to the territory north of Red River. The federal authorities finally consented, and the opportunity for mission work among them passed with their removal. Byars had been more keenly interested in the proposed missionary project than anyone else, and, consequently, suffered great disappointment at the failure of the Baptists to minister to their spiritual

needs. When the convention met in Waco, in October, 1859, he reproached the Baptists bitterly for their failure to carry the gospel to the Indians. ³⁷

37 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1859, p. 28.

West Fork and Brazos River Associations

The missionary labors of Byars in the West Fork Association carried him to the counties west of the association proper. He visited Palo Pinto county during the winter of 1856-1857 and organized four churches. He made trips into Erath and Comanche counties and preached in those more remote sections. The extreme frontier appealed to him, but he refused to neglect the more settled sections for the destitute and lonely fringe. The summer of 1856 found him in widely separated sections of the association. Late in May he conducted a revival meeting at Cedar Hill in Dallas county. Two weeks later he was with the Cross Timbers Church in Johnson county. July found him organizing two churches in Parker county. Early August claimed his labor with the Walnut Creek Church in Parker county. ³⁸ Revival meetings, however,

38 Texas Baptist, June 10, July 1, September 2, 1856.

did not claim his entire attention. In a communication to the editor of a Baptist paper at Anderson, Texas, he wrote:

Met with Harmony Church in New Kentucky on the Brazos last Saturday to ordain Bro. Holford to ministry but rest of presbytery failed to come and it was postponed until the Association met. Baptized Holford's wife. Sister Holford had been a Methodist for twenty years... She is truly an intelligent woman, and the daughter of the celebrated Col. David Crockett. 39

39 Ibid., September 26, 1856.

As his work bore fruit in the baptism of new converts and in the organization of further churches, the demand for an association began to grow. Midsummer of 1856 found twelve churches in the western part of the West Fork Association favoring a new general body. Byars was pastor of Macedonia and Union Churches in Palo Pinto county, as well as missionary for the region in general. In his capacity as missionary, he took the responsibility of encouraging the proposed association. He called upon the churches to elect delegates to meet with the Providence Church in Parker county in early October, 1858. Thirty delegates, from twelve churches in Johnson, Parker, Erath, and Palo Pinto counties with a total membership of four hundred and one responded. The delegates chose Byars as moderator. In this capacity he recommended the adoption of the articles of faith, as contained in

Brown's Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, which were the New Hampshire Declaration. The delegates consented, and chose to name their organization the Brazos River Association. 40

40 Minutes, Brazos River Association, 1858, pp. 1-12.

Many of the frontier ministers were men whose educational advantages were meager. Byars was one of these, and he felt his handicap very keenly. The first thought of the pioneers was safety for themselves and economic independence for their families. The frontier on the upper Brazos in 1858, was dangerous, but it offered economic independence. Schools were few and of short duration at best. Byars' children were without school facilities and it disturbed him. He sought to acquaint his brethren with the difficulties by writing: "My salary, at best, away on this frontier will not support me, and I am positively distressed. I do not have a child in school although all of them need to be." 41

41 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

The Brazos River Association on the second day of its initial sitting took note of the need for better

educational advantages. The Committee on Education in reporting to the association said:

Your committee on education would respectfully call your serious attention to the fact that we live in a progressive age, that educational enterprise is advancing with accelerated velocity, that we, as a denomination, are without any institution of learning in North Western Texas, and if we remain inactive in this energetic age, we shall be left behind to lament our inactivity. ⁴²

⁴² Minutes, Brazos River Association, 1858, pp. 8-13.

Following the reading of the report, the delegates engaged in an animated discussion of the benefits of education from both secular and denominational points of view. Adopting the committee's report and interposing a resolution that the "association go into the enterprise of erecting and establishing an institution of learning under its patronage, and that the moderator appoint a committee to report tomorrow morning on the expediency of the enterprise and to designate the place of location," the group of delegates committed themselves to definite action. ⁴³

⁴³ Ibid.

Byars named the committee, and by a vote of the delegates he also became a member. That the special committee considered the matter expedient is demonstrated in the action of the association. Upon hearing the report, the delegates voted unanimously to build a school and to locate it at Golconda, in Palo Pinto county. 44

44 Ibid., The name of the village was later changed from Golconda to Palo Pinto, and is now the county seat of Palo Pinto county.

Following this action of the association, Byars called upon those present to make an offering for the school, and seven hundred and twenty dollars were paid as the initial fund with which to begin operation. 45

45 The minutes of the association state that \$7.20 represent the amount raised at the associational meeting. Carroll's History of Texas Baptists, page 224, credits the minutes in this amount. In a letter to the Texas Baptist, January 26, 1859, M. Ikard, the clerk of the association, cites the error of the minutes and gives the correct amount as \$720.00.

Byars entered heartily into the work of furthering the new project and began a systematic effort to raise funds. He moved to Golconda March 15, 1859, and from this point canvassed the frontier during that year. The following year found him among his former friends on the lower

Brazos soliciting funds. ⁴⁶ Late in 1860 he made a

⁴⁶ Texas Baptist, March 31, 1859. Ibid., May 17, 1860.

trip to Mississippi in the interest of the school. ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ibid., January 23, 1861.

While Byars was in the field raising the necessary money, his friends at home were not idle. They quarried the stone and burned the lime for the two-story structure. During the winter of 1859-1860 the building took shape, but disappointment came to its builders when the poor quality of lime used in its erection caused the walls to crumble. Byars continued his efforts in raising funds, but the Civil War, which was then in the offing, so far overshadowed every other interest that he met with little success. One term of school and one meeting of the Brazos River Association were the extent of the use of the building. ⁴⁸ The building was razed in 1867. ⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

⁴⁹ Ibid., November 17, 1882.

Civil War Period

Although the northwest frontier was far from the seat of combat of the Civil War, yet the frontier citizens were keenly alive to its almost universal appeal. The Secession Convention passed the Ordinance of Secession on February 1, 1861. ⁵⁰ Even before the various counties

⁵⁰ E. W. Winkler (ed.), Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas, 1861, pp. 54-55.

had voted to ratify the ordinance, troops under the command of Colonel H. E. McCulloch began taking over the various forts along the frontier. ⁵¹ This action

⁵¹ Ibid., 370-374.

encouraged the Indians to inroads upon the settlements, and life on the frontier became extremely hazardous. In order to escape the danger, Byars moved with his family to Plantersville, in Grimes county, late in April, 1861. ⁵²

⁵² Texas Baptist, May 24, 1861.

Here on May 19, 1861, he and G. W. Baines, editor of the Texas Baptist, organized the Plantersville Baptist Church, and Byars agreed to preach for the congregation one

Sunday each month. 53 The same characteristic moving

53 Ibid.

about which had been his habit on the frontier manifested itself in his work in the centers of population. Pastoring the church at Plantersville and two churches in Chambers county kept him busy traveling between them. But he found time for other activities also. The Confederate Army recruited its soldiers from the thickly populated sections and occupied various posts in the coast region and Eastern Texas. Regular army chaplains ministered to the needs of the soldiers, but so great was the number of men in the army that the chaplains could not reach them all. As in all wars, the civilian population evinced a special solicitude for the men in uniform. During the first two years of the war the Baptists of Texas took no public action toward providing special religious opportunities for the men in the army. Many ministers on their own responsibility offered their services. By the third year the Baptists were passing resolutions and appropriating funds with which to furnish spiritual guidance for the enlisted men. 54

54 Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, 317-326.

At the meeting of the Baptist State Convention in 1863, a sum of more than nine thousand dollars was appropriated for this purpose and the executive board was directed to employ special missionaries. ⁵⁵ The names of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 319.

men selected by the board are unknown. Byars made mention of his services in this respect, but failed to state whether or not he was a paid worker. ⁵⁶ If to

⁵⁶ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

assume were legitimate, the assumption would be that he received no remuneration. His restless energy would have driven him to the task long before his fellow-ministers realized the need.

Surrendering his pastorate at Plantersville, Byars moved to Cedar Bayou, in Chambers county, in August, 1863. From this point he pastored the Danville Church in Montgomery county and gave a part of his time to missionary efforts for the Baptist State Convention. ⁵⁷ His field

⁵⁷ Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1864, p. 32.

of effort was in the Tryon Association, of which body he was moderator for three years. ⁵⁸ The year, 1866, found

⁵⁸ Minutes, Tryon Association, 1864, p. 1; Ibid., 1865, p. 2; Ibid., 1866, p. 2.

him again in the employ of the Baptist State Convention in the Tryon Association. During that year he traveled four hundred fifty miles, preached forty sermons, and organized one Sunday School. ⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1867, p. 19.

It was while serving the Baptist Convention that Byars made his second attempt at founding a school. Securing the cooperation of the Baptists in the Tryon Association, he opened a school known as Byars' Institute at Byers' Bluff near Cedar Bayou, in Chambers county, in 1867. Byars was president of the board of trustees and A. Goddard was principal. There were separate departments for boys and girls, although all classes were conducted in the same building. A daily religious service was a part of the school's activity, and attendance upon the services of the local church, of which Byars was pastor, was another requirement. The school operated for three years. ⁶⁰

60 C. B. Wilson, A History of Baptist Education in Texas, 1829-1900, Doctor's Dissertation, University of Texas, 1934.

Activities in Mississippi

Byars closed his work with the Cedar Bayou Church November 1, 1868, and in December following moved to Mississippi. Just what he did during the interval from December, 1868, to May, 1869, we have no means of knowing. He was in the employ of the Mississippi State Convention as evangelist from May to August, 1869. ⁶¹

61 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

The exact meaning of evangelist is not clear. It is hardly probable that the term meant a minister who gave his full time to holding revival meetings. Byars would have tired of that sort of work. His penchant for organization would have driven him into another type of endeavor. Besides, he was a doctrinal preacher, who struck openly and boldly at those whom he considered in error. More than likely the term was a provincialism used in Mississippi to denote missionary work.

After resigning his work with the state organization in August, 1869, Byars accepted appointment as missionary for the Sunflower Association in Central Mississippi, in

which place he remained until October, 1871. . 62

62 Ibid.

West Fork Association

Conditions in the deep South had little appeal to Byars. A third of a century in Texas had ingrained a love of the state in every fiber of his nature. Texas was still the frontier, and the frontier was in his blood. Accordingly, back to Texas he came in November, 1871. He lived at Lancaster, in Dallas county, until the spring of 1872, at which time he again entered actively the mission work. West Fork Association was without a missionary. Byars offered his services. The Executive Board's report tells the story:

About the last of April [1872], Bro. Byars offered his services to the Board and we employed him from that time until the Association [September 20]. We have paid Bro. Byars \$130.70 including his collections, which leaves a balance due him of \$69.30. 63

63 Minutes, West Fork Association, 1872, p. 7.

Thus again we find him in his old haunts of eighteen years previous - this time in the employ of the West Fork Association at a salary of forty dollars per month. His report for his five months' service is indicative of himself. 64

Miles traveled	1473	
Sermons preached	75	
Families visited	250	
Amount received from Churches		\$68.00
Amount received from agents		30.20
Amount received from individuals		6.95
Amount received from Board		25.50

64 Ibid.

The population of the region had increased greatly in the years that had intervened since 1854, when he first came to Tarrant county. Still there was the same need for missionary effort. Unenlisted Baptists had to be ferreted out from among the population and organized into churches. Weak and struggling churches had to be pastored until such time as a minister came whose yearning was for the pastorate. Ministers of the gospel had to be ordained. Sunday Schools must needs be instituted. Bibles and other religious literature must be distributed. The ordination of deacons was necessary. Error was apparent, and dangerous. He must point it out and combat it. These were the things he had set himself to do in July, 1841. These were the things he had been doing ever since that time, and these were the things he did in the West Fork Association from April, 1872, until January, 1875. 65

65 Minutes, West Fork Association, 1872, p. 7; Ibid., 1873, p. 4; Ibid., 1874, p. 5.

During the last year of his work in the West Fork Association Byars lived in Gainesville, in Cook county. 66

66 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1874, p. 18.

Just when he left the Red River section is uncertain. He had no official connection with an association between January 1, and November 1, 1875. Early in May he was living at Florence in Williamson county and was pastoring a small rural church in eastern Burnet county. 67

67 N. T. and S. A. Byars, to B. T. Byars, May 12, 1875. This is one of the few letters written by either Byars or his wife that has been preserved. It is in the possession of Noah A. Byars, Eastland, Texas.

Salado Association

Opportunity to do mission work again presented itself, and he eagerly accepted the offer of the Salado Baptist Association on November 1, 1875, to represent that body. 68 Byars was now a few months past sixty-

68 Minutes, Salado Baptist Association, 1876, p. 6. The Salado Association was a new body made up of twenty-two churches in Bell, Milam, and Williamson counties. The minutes of the "organization and first session" fail to give the date of the first meeting. The initial meeting convened at Salado, in Bell county most probably in 1874, since the minutes show that the second session would be held in August, 1875.

seven years of age. His activity, however, was unimpaired. He entered into his work whole-heartedly. Mounting his horse, he traveled prodigious distances. His report to the association July 1, 1876, which closed his first eight months of work read: 69

Miles traveled-	- - - - -	3176
Sermons-	- - - - -	120
Families visited	- - - - -	362
Churches constituted	- - - - -	7
Baptized	- - - - -	3
Assisted in ordaining ministers	- - - - -	2
Ordained deacons	- - - - -	4

69 Ibid.

This represented a ride of thirteen miles every day, a sermon every second day, a visit to more than one family every day, and all of this for a salary of thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents per month. 70

70 Ibid.

One explanation of the great number of miles traveled lies in the practice that was then common among associational missionaries. They did not confine their efforts entirely to the churches represented in their association. This work they left largely to the pastors of the churches. The missionaries rather gave themselves and their efforts to sections that were without churches and destitute of

preaching. Thus a missionary might engage in a revival meeting in one locality. Upon the close of his meeting, if his efforts were needed in territory outside of his association and not included in another, he arranged to labor in the new locality. This practice Byars followed soon after accepting the work of the Salado Association, and his work centered very largely in Hamilton county, ⁷¹

⁷¹ Texas Baptist, April 6, 1876.

although one missionary trip in February, 1876, took him sixty miles farther west than Hamilton county to the extreme frontier in Brown county. ⁷²

⁷² Minutes, First Baptist Church, Brownwood, Texas, I, 1-5.

At that time Brown county was the fringe of civilization. The population numbered less than five hundred people. ⁷³ Many of the settlers still lived

⁷³ Census Report, United States, Population, I, Ninth Census, 1870, p. 63.

in tents. ⁷⁴ There were only five churches in the

⁷⁴ Texas Baptist, February 24, 1876.

entire county with a constituency numbering less than one hundred members. ⁷⁵ Only three ministers lived in

⁷⁵ T. R. Havins, The History of Brown County, 74-76, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1931.

the territory. Two of these, the Reverend J. M. Perry and the Reverend Ben Wilson, were Baptist ministers. ⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Texas Baptist, February 15, 1877.

Byars had known Perry in Chambers county during the Civil War period. ⁷⁷ He made his way to the home of

⁷⁷ Jesse Perry to Havins, June 26, 1939, in Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library, Brownwood.

Perry in northwestern Brown county the middle of February, 1876. The two of them visited the Baptists in the town of Brownwood and aroused an interest among them in the organization of a church. Accordingly, on February 19, 1876, they led in the organization of the church with eight charter members. ⁷⁸ The following day, February 20,

⁷⁸ Minutes, First Baptist Church, Brownwood, Texas, I, 1-5.

Byars and the Rev. Ben Wilson organized the Live Oak Baptist Church ten miles south of Brownwood with thirty members. ⁷⁹

79 Minutes, Live Oak Baptist Church, 1-7.

Following this trip into Brown county, Byars gave his attention to the needs of Hamilton county. Writing to the Texas Baptist on April 6, 1876, he said:

In the past three months I have traveled 1027 miles, preached 42 sermons, constituted 4 churches, baptized 3 and visited 144 families. My horse has been stolen and I am now riding an old slug that would wear out a much younger man, much less one 68 years old.

Sensing Byars' difficulties the editor remarked: "Could not some one furnish this old road blazer, tent invader, with a good easy saddle-horse?"

The work in Hamilton county was a hundred miles from his home at Florence. His wife's health was poor. His four sons were now away from home. Under these circumstances he felt that he must have her near him. Early in April, 1876, the Bennett Creek Baptist Church in southwestern Hamilton county led in a movement to build a rock house large enough for a small family with whom his wife could stay while he was away from home. The church appealed to the First Baptist Church of Waco and certain Baptists in Dallas to furnish funds with which to buy the necessary lumber and shingles. The

Waco Church responded with a gift of fifty dollars. 80

80 Texas Baptist, April 13, 1876.

Upon receipt of the contribution from the Waco Church the enterprise got under way. Meanwhile, about the middle of July, Byars moved his sick wife from Florence to the home of James Carter in Hamilton county. Here she died September 1, 1876. 81

81 Ibid., September 26, 1876.

The old man felt the loss keenly. Her illness during the summer had kept him from his work somewhat and he offered a half-hearted apology for the quarterly report he submitted on June 26, 1876, which showed: 82

Traveled 900 miles
 Preached 28 sermons
 Visited 93 families
 Constituted 1 church
 Assisted in ordaining 2 deacons and 1 minister.

82 Ibid., July 6, 1876.

With his wife gone, his work absorbed his entire time during the autumn of 1876. On October 30, he wrote:

I am carrying on a very interesting meeting, at this time, in a place where there had never been any Baptist preaching before I commenced. The first time I tried to make an appointment there was a horse race on hand, and I could not get in. 83

83 Ibid., November 16, 1876.

The results of this meeting are not known. But whatever the results, Byars left them to the future. This was his nature. He preached boldly without fear of what antagonisms might arise as the result of his message.

Byars closed his work with the Salado Association with the end of the year, 1876. His meager salary had never been paid regularly, ⁸⁴ and the corresponding

84 Minutes, Salado Baptist Association, 1876, p. 6. Texas Baptist, November 23, 1876.

secretary of the association had neglected to keep him informed as to the action of the executive board of the association. ⁸⁵ Nursing his sorrow, he felt the seeming

85 Texas Baptist, November 16, 1876.

neglect, and when, in December, 1876, the opportunity to do missionary work for the Baptist General Association presented itself at a salary of five hundred dollars per year, he accepted. ⁸⁶

86 Texas Baptist, January 11, 1877. The Baptist General Association grew out of the dissatisfaction of some of the Baptist churches in eastern Texas in 1853, over the matter of the distribution of mission funds by the board of the Baptist State Convention. The East

Texas churches felt that discrimination had been shown in favor of the churches in the West. Organizing the general body at Larissa church in Cherokee county in November, 1853, they duplicated the work of the Baptist State Convention. A little more than a year later, on May 24, 1855, meeting in Tyler, the delegates agreed to change the name of the body to the Baptist Convention of Eastern Texas. The new convention carried on its work in Eastern Texas and gradually drew into its membership a number of the churches in the central and northern sections of the state. Finally at Chatfield, in Navarro county, on July 17, 1868, delegates from sixteen churches in nine counties, with two associations also represented, abolished the Baptist Convention of Eastern Texas and organized the Baptist General Association. It continued its work until its consolidation with the Baptist State Convention in 1886. See Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, pp. 8-9. Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 446-456.

When the Baptist General Association reinstituted its work in 1868, the delegates adopted a report setting forth that: "Home Missions is the work for which we are assembled," and in addition urged the churches and the district associations to give impetus to this type of work by liberal support in finances and in the employment of missionaries. ⁸⁷ The General Association followed

⁸⁷ Proceedings, First Annual Session, Baptist General Association of Texas, 1868, pp. 6-7.

up the report by the appointment of two missionaries for 1869-1870, and the years following. With the coming of 1877, the number was increased to four. Byars'

field of labor was designated as Hamilton, Comanche, and the counties adjoining, while J. F. Jackson was assigned to Jack and adjoining counties. The others were to do work among the Indians. ⁸⁸

 88 Texas Baptist, June 14, 1877.

Byars took for his first task a survey of the field, a "swing around the circuit," as he termed it, ⁸⁹ at

 89 Texas Baptist, March 8, 1877.

which time he observed the needs of the churches and the centers of population. The observations he made impressed him forcibly.

I have been in eight counties since my last (report), and the destitution is distressing. To see the eager crowds that flocked out to hear the Word from their tents and their cabins, and to hear the words 'When will you come again?' would have moved the stoutest heart.

Seap [Sipe] Springs is a growing village. The proprietor says he will give a lot if I will get up a church there.

Eastland City has organized church but pastor is gone, and they are left out in the cold.

Bell Plain growing village, county site of Callahan. No Baptist preacher in the county.

Coleman City is a beautiful place. Baptists have a vantage ground here but no minister in town.

Brownwood, now almost city, has prosperous young church, with young and improving B. Wilson as pastor. Brown county by no means supplied with preaching.

Williams Ranch growing village and other points have no Baptist preaching. The whole country is emphatically a missionary field. Suppose there are a few stumps of preachers coming into this vast field, are they not in tents or in cabins at best? What can they do? 90

90 Texas Baptist, March 8, 1877.

The cry of the frontier among Baptists was for preachers. Byars saw the need, and, engaged as he was in founding churches, he realized more keenly than others that the permanence of his work depended upon the coming of other ministers who would follow him and nurture the churches after he had constituted them. He realized also that they must be preachers of the right sort, and his long association with missionary work and his contacts with rabid denominationalism made him critical. Of a group whom he had observed, he wrote:

There are 4 or 5 Baptist ministers in Brown county considered sound in the faith and practice, one who has caused division, and one who opposed everything that has money or works in it. 91

91 Texas Baptist, February 15, 1877.

An article in the Texas Baptist, of the issue of February 1, 1877, entitled "Do You Want a Field?", and containing

a resolution of the Sims' Creek Church in Hamilton county expresses the dearth of ministers.

There are eleven churches in the Western part of Hamilton county and adjacent sections that are connected with no association or only temporarily. Bro. N. T. Byars only preacher in this section and he is employed as missionary of the General Association. Would have organized an Association last summer but lack of ministers led them to postpone such effort until this summer. 92

92 Texas Baptist, February 1, 1877.

The detached churches in the Hamilton county region determined upon the organization of an association in the spring of 1877. Byars encouraged them and issued a call for a convention of delegates for July 4. Apprising the Baptists of Texas of his action he wrote: "The devil transacts a great deal of business on that day, and let us do something for the Lord on that day." 93

93 Texas Baptist, June 21, 1877.

The churches responded to the call of Byars for the election of delegates and their representatives met at Cottonwood Springs, one and one-half miles north of the village of Evant, Coryell county, July 4, 1877. Nine

churches were represented. Four of these were members of the Leon River Association and five were detached churches in Hamilton county. Byars was chairman of the convention. This was the third general body of Baptists whom he had led in an organization of like nature. 94

94 J. M. Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895 p. 28. He was the inspiration of the organization of the Pecan Valley Baptist Association in 1876, although he was not present at the initial meeting. He visited the churches two weeks previous to the meeting and urged them to elect delegates. See Minutes, First Baptist Church, Brownwood, I, 16-18, Minutes, Blanket Baptist Church, 23-24.

Brown County

Following closely the founding of the Hamilton County Association, Byars married Mrs. B. J. Moore, a resident of Comanche county at Hamilton, Texas, 95

95 Mrs. B. J. Moore Jr. to Havins, January 4, 1936, in Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library.

and then moved to Brownwood, where he bought a small tract of land. 96 Alluding to this move Byars wrote

96 Deed Records, Brown County, Vol. G, 122.

that his missionary efforts were practically over and
 "like an old vessel he was laid up." ⁹⁷ He did, however,

97 Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

keep up his activity between attacks of illness, and in
 1879, accepted appointment under the Home Mission Board
 of the Southern Baptist Convention. ⁹⁸ This appoint-

98 Texas Baptist Herald, August 14, 1879.

ment of Byars was the expression of an expansion
 program by the Home Mission Board. Ten missionaries
 received appointments for work in Texas. A survey
 by the board just previous to the appointments had
 revealed a "great dearth of preaching and Sunday
 Schools". ⁹⁹

99 Proceedings, Southern Baptist Convention, 1880,
 p. 20.

During the interval of the seventies the Home Mission
 Board had done very little work in Texas. ¹⁰⁰ After

100 Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, 566.

1879, however, the subsidization of mission work in Texas by the board gave such impetus that the secretary of the Baptist General Convention wrote:

Referring to the work done in past years, which has resulted in the establishment of about one thousand churches, and the baptism of many thousands of believers, we could not have done a tithe of the work without the help of the board. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Proceedings, Southern Baptist Convention, 1889, p. 44.

His work for the Home Mission Board lasted only a little over a year, because of ill health. Early in 1881, the church at Brownwood called him to its pastorate, where he remained for a year. ¹⁰² During most of 1883, he was

¹⁰² Minutes, Pecan Valley Association, 1892, p. 12.

inactive. The next year he was again at work for the Home Mission Board and the Baptist State Convention. There had been some agitation in the Baptist press for several years with reference to relief by the denomination of aged ministers and their wives. The matter came up for discussion in the Baptist State Convention in 1884, but no definite action was taken. The consciousness of the need, however, led the executive board to appoint "Rev. N. T. Byars to do such work as he was able, more

to assist in supporting him in his old age than for active service he might perform". 103 The Home

103 Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1885, pp. 20-21.

Mission Board and the convention proposed to share equally the expense of his salary. The year's work bore fruit in ten sermons and forty religious visits. 104

104 Ibid.

The old man was now too old and enfeebled for further work, and his activity ceased.

CHAPTER V

Missionary Methods

General Organization

So strong among Baptists is the belief in the sovereignty of the local church that the whole program of the denomination centers around this doctrine. Believing as they do in a militant policy of evangelism, the Baptists have adopted from time to time aggressive methods which, though not distinctive, enable the churches to function cooperatively and still preserve their individual sovereignty. When, in 1848, the delegates from the churches on the lower Brazos and Colorado Rivers met to form the Baptist State Convention, they were careful to insert in the constitution adopted for the new body the elements of their doctrine that "The Convention shall never possess a single attribute of power over any church or association."¹ The leaders launched the movement as a

¹ "Baptist State Convention—First Half Decade," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 257-284.

strictly cooperative effort. They set out the objects to be attained in plain and forceful language.

The objects of this Convention shall be missionary and educational, the promotion of harmony of feeling and concert of action in our denomination, and the organization of a system of operative measures to promote the interest generally of our Redeemer's Kingdom within the State. 2"

2 Ibid., 258.

Membership in this new cooperative missionary enterprise was thrown open to individual Baptists upon the payment of five dollars into the treasury of the convention. Baptist associations, Baptist churches, and societies within such bodies were entitled to representation on the basis of one delegate for every five dollars paid to the objects of the convention. Any Baptist church not holding membership in an association was entitled to one delegate, whether or not it had contributed to the funds of the convention.³

3 Ibid., 259.

Since the convention met only once each year, and since its work included the cooperative efforts of all the churches that were members, provision for the promulgation and prosecution of the program of the convention rested on a board of directors of not less than twenty members. The convention elected the directors annually and provided that their powers should be "the powers of the Convention."⁴ The board of directors held quarterly

4 Ibid., 259.

meetings and submitted an annual report to the convention.⁵

⁵ Ibid., 259.

Thus the members of the board became the actual agents for whatever missionary endeavor the convention proposed, though, in actual practice, they refused or neglected to perform various measures promoted and adopted by the convention.

The Baptist Convention of Eastern Texas, out of which grew the Baptist General Association in 1868, had as its objects

To unite the influence and pious intelligence of Eastern Texas Baptists, and thereby facilitate their union and cooperation; to form and encourage plans for the revival of experimental and practical religion in the State and elsewhere; to aid in giving effect to useful plans of the Associations, in their missionary, as well as other operations;.....and to promote pious and useful education in the Baptist denomination.⁶

⁶ J. M. Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p.8.

The Baptist General Association was almost identical with the Baptist State Convention in its organization, its officers, and the powers of its board of directors. This body drew its membership from churches in a number of counties that were represented in the Baptist State Convention. These two general bodies were the motivating

forces for a large part of the missionary work performed by Texas Baptists in the period between 1848 and 1885. There were other Baptist conventions organized in Texas during the same interval, but only one of these, the Central Texas Baptist Convention, which was organized in Dublin, Texas, on November 12, 1880, operated in the territory in which Byars labored, hence they have no place in this story.⁷

⁷ Ibid., 11.

Even before the organization of the State Convention and the General Association, the Baptists of Texas had their district and county associations, through which they prosecuted missionary work. These general bodies usually consisted of member churches varying in number from less than ten to more than forty. When the need for an association arose, the churches that were involved elected delegates to a convention, and the convention in turn set up the association. The procedure was practically the same in all cases. It consisted of a vote by the delegates in the convention that a presbytery, made up of the ordained ministers who were present, draw up a declaration of faith of the proposed association. A committee of the delegates then prepared a constitution. Following the adoption of a declaration of faith and of a constitution, the association

proceeded to adopt an order of business, which was little more than a set of by-laws to govern the procedure in the meetings of the body.⁸ Each church in the association

8 Minutes, Pecan Valley Baptist Association, 1876, p. 1-3; Texas Baptist, June 21, 1877. Byars always demanded the presence of other ordained ministers before organizing an association.

elected one of its members as its representative on the executive board of the larger body. The board had authority to act for the association for the year, and, in this capacity, carried out whatever missionary program the association launched. Thus the board had authority to hire a missionary, to collect and disburse funds, and to initiate any measures, which in its judgment demanded action.⁹

9 From the organization of Union Association in June, 1840, to the death of Byars in July, 1888, Baptists in Texas organized sixty-nine associations. Thirty-five of these were in the territory in which Byars did his work, and thirty-four were outside that territory. Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, pp. 25-35.

Organization of Churches

Another method for propagating their mission work was the organization of churches. Emigrants to Texas came from many quarters of the United States. They represented all shades of religious opinions and convictions.

Since the greater portion of the population was from the states of the South and the Southwest, where Methodists and Baptists outnumbered all other denominations, it was but natural that these two groups should outstrip the others in point of numbers, both in churches and in church constituencies. As the emigrants settled in their new homes, they were, except in a few instances, among peoples of diverse religious views. Many times a denomination would be represented by only one family. In other instances several families of the same faith were located in close proximity to each other. To ferret out the Baptists among the population and organize them into a church was the work of the individual missionary. This he did by riding from one house or tent to another. Roads were poor. Distances between stops were many times long and lonely. Dangers from wild beasts and from still wilder men beset him; but with rifle across the saddle, with a brace of pistols belted around his waist, and with saddlebags containing a change of linen, a Bible, and religious tracts, he went to his task.¹⁰

10 Texas Baptist, June 21, 1877. On the occasion of a visit to Hamilton, Texas, by the general agent of the Baptist General Association, he asked, "Brother Byars, where do you live?" Byars replied: "I live in my saddle, and my saddle is my home."

One of the favorite expressions used by Byars in describing this type of work was to allude to his brethren as "scattered Baptists."¹¹ Having found such a group, it

¹¹ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

was his custom, as well as that of other missionaries, to call them together on a certain date and to organize a local church. His procedure was the same in each case. When the group assembled, he first preached a sermon, after which he acted as presbyter and proceeded to constitute the church. He always recommended the New Hampshire Declaration as the basis for the articles of faith of the organization. At the close of the meeting he gave to the church a document which read,

On the _____ day of _____ 18____, I met the scattered Baptists at _____, by previous appointment, and after prayerful consideration proceeded and constituted A, B; C, D; and E, F a Baptist Church, with all the powers and privileges as such.

N. T. Byars,
Presbyter.¹²

¹² Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

Preaching

In numerous instances the missionary failed to find enough Baptists to use as a nucleus in organizing a church. Upon such occasions he resorted to the expedient of preaching

to the few whom he could assemble together. A favorite method was to visit among all the settlers in a locality and to announce that he would preach at the home of some citizen on a certain day. The preacher usually made it a point to hold the services in the home of some man who was a Baptist, although this was not always the case. Isolated as were the frontier settlers, and hungry for religious and social contacts, they eagerly embraced the opportunity offered by these home services. Commenting on such a meeting in central Texas in 1860, a citizen wrote in his diary, "Sunday preaching at Mr. Kimbroes by parson Montgomery."¹³ Three months later he observed,

¹³ J. K. Greer (ed.), "The Diary of James Buckner Barry," in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI, 150.

"Rev. Fleming preached at my house good many neighbors gathered in."¹⁴ Such preaching was conducive of good

¹⁴ Ibid., 153-154.

results. The first conversion under Baptist preaching in Texas resulted from a sermon by the Reverend Thomas Hanks in the home of Moses Shipman at San Felipe.¹⁵

¹⁵ Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 62.

Again, they were occasions for great religious fervor. The Rev. John A. Freeman came to Texas from Missouri, in 1845. He preached his first sermon in the home of James Gibson in Dallas county. Of the occasion he wrote:

Nearly all the people turned out to hear preaching. We commenced by singing some good songs. There was a deep solemnity pervading the entire congregation, and many shed tears at the end of the service.¹⁶

¹⁶ J. A. Freeman, "Recollections of Early Days in Texas," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 94-96.

Gradually the less extreme frontier became more populous. Church buildings, school houses, court rooms, and lodge halls were available for worship, and in those communities the practice of preaching in homes ceased almost altogether.¹⁷

¹⁷ F. M. Cross, Early Days in Central Texas, 60.

Revival Meetings

Summer in Texas is the season requiring the least amount of work among the rural population. The day of the frontier was the era of a sparse and rural people. Because of these facts the churches fell into a custom of holding special revival services during the summer. So fixed became the custom that it still obtains in most of

the rural sections and in many cities and towns. At this season of the year the frontier missionary gave practically his entire time to holding revival meetings.¹⁸ When no

¹⁸ Texas Baptist, July 1, September 2, September 26, 1856.

other minister was available as an aid, he carried the entire burden. On occasions a group of ministers would preach, each taking his turn in the pulpit.¹⁹

¹⁹ Texas Baptist, October 7, 1859.

The summer revivals usually touched a single community. They were conducive to the conversion of unbelievers and the addition of membership to the church rolls. A typical revival among the Baptists in central Texas is described thus:

A remarkable meeting closed at Post Oak Church two and one-half miles north of this place on the 21st inst. A large concourse of people gathered at Little River to witness the baptism. The most notable feature of the day was the baptism of the entire family of Bro. Thos. Smith, consisting of father, mother, and five children. They advanced into the water first, and were baptized by Bro. Martin, after which the pastor, M. L. Langford, and Br. Martin baptized alternately until all were baptized.²⁰

²⁰ Texas Baptist Herald, September 11, 1884.

Revivals among all evangelical bodies were an outgrowth of the Great Revival in the West at the beginning of the century. Although they had lost much of the exceptional behavior that once marked that event, they still engendered among Baptists, with the use of the mourners' bench and earnest exhortation, a religious fervor which some leaders regarded as superficial. Criticizing their use, the editor of The Western Baptist Review, of Frankfort, Kentucky, in January 1846, wrote:

It will be conceded that the regular administration of the Word on the Lord's day, and the uniform walking of the disciples in truth, are the grand instruments appointed by God for the conversion of sinners and for the perfecting of the saints in those graces which will establish their claim to a place in the church triumphant.

But the editor was a lone voice whom the Baptist ministers in Texas refused to hear. They kept on holding revivals and added to their membership. Byars himself took great pride in this phase of his work and reported fifty-three conversions between July 12, and September 13, 1877.²¹

21 Texas Baptist, September 13, 1877.

Revivals among the Baptists in Texas were not always confined to scheduled meetings with certain churches. Associational meetings were oftentimes the occasion for a great show of spiritual activity. Such a revival is described by one of the participating ministers in a

graphic manner.

When the Trinity River Association met in September (1855), with the Little River church in Milam County, thirteen new churches petitioned for membership and were received. The revival spirit pervaded the whole body during the entire session, and for a week after the association adjourned the people of that community continued to wait on the Lord with abundant manifestations of His presence to save sinners.

This was one of those dry seasons that in years past visited this country. Water was so scarce that it was necessary either to disappoint the brethren expecting to attend the meeting, or pitch our tents in another locality. Accordingly, the brethren camped at the Block House Springs, seven miles from the church edifice, in primitive style. This was the beginning of a Baptist camp-meeting. Friday the association convened, and all through the day the plainest indications were given that the Lord was among his people. The committee on preachers did not stop to go through the whole list of preachers present, and, lest they might hurt somebody's feelings, make arrangements to give every man a chance; nor did they take into consideration the fact that if some of the more prominent brethren were put forward at the beginning, or not invited to preach at times when the congregation would be larger than others, they might go away dissatisfied. The only question seemed to be, to find the man whose heart was full of the Spirit of God, and most likely to effect, under God, the greatest amount of good.

Elder R. C. Burleson was chosen as the man for Friday night. Selecting his text from the book of Numbers, he read with emphasis, 'And be sure your sin will find you out!!' My opinion is that he has seldom in life excelled that sermon. Sin was held up to the gazing audience, deceiving first its votaries, then causing its subjects to openly violate, step by step, both the laws of men and God. The judgments of God, that will certainly be measured out to evil-doers, thereby showing that the 'way of the transgressor is hard!!' were so forcibly presented, that sinners cried for mercy and fled to Christ for deliverance.

The Association adjourned on Tuesday, and on the following day more than thirty persons had been buried in baptism. Every one who had given public demonstration of a decided interest professed conversion and was baptized. Under these circumstances, the writer delivered a farewell address, supposing that it was

the mind of the Spirit to close the meeting. Earnest solicitations were now sent to continue the services, and at night a large number of persons came in from a distance. After the sermon, about thirty-five of these newcomers presented themselves as penitents, inquiring the way of life. Services were continued until the following Monday, and in all sixty-four persons were baptized.²²

22 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, p. 343-344.

Just as the revival was an instrument of the local church for reaching the unconverted, so, also, the camp-meeting revival was an instrument for reaching the same group in larger areas. These meetings appealed especially to the people of the frontier. Social contacts were meager at best, and the camp-meetings afforded ample opportunity for social contacts. In addition they brought together many of the best ministers of the denominations to do the preaching. The leaders in charge of the plans set the date of the meetings months in advance, and the settlers looked forward to them and made preparations for attendance. The camp-meetings usually began on Thursday or Friday and continued through the following week. Describing such a gathering an observer wrote:

Before me stretched a grove of tall pines, beneath whose dark foliage, and in striking contrast to the same, were pitched numerous white tents, in a regular circle, embracing a level area several acres in extent.

Continuing, he gave a minute word picture of the brush arbor with its supporting posts, its flickering torches,

its rude benches, arranged in a semicircle about the pulpit, the solemn preacher and his impassioned plea which brought forth "the sighs, the sobs, the hysteric shrieks of terrified females, and, indeed the convulsive shudder of the whole assembly."²⁴

24 Upper Canada Baptist Missionary Magazine, I, 106-107.

Another interested spectator of a later date saw more than the visible exterior of the camp meeting. He sensed the spiritual values and the psychological dangers as well:

It was high noon when we reached the camp-ground, and all around saw indications of the immense gathering. Perhaps you never saw a camp-meeting and require some words of explanation. In the central area to which we were at once introduced, stands a goodly sized meeting-house some 60 or 70 feet in extent, sustained by its posts, but without any covering on its sides. All over the ground underneath and far and wide on each side, seats are closely arranged, so that the occupants shall all sit facing the stand or pulpit, erected under one end of the roof. A large congregation was listening when we entered; though we were grieved to see so many loiterers without the camp. The minister finished his discourse and the Lord's Supper was administered.

Then followed the recess and the outer accommodations of the camp were brought into requisition. All around the center, which has been described, leaving an interior area of perhaps 200 feet square, were rows of booths and sheds boarded up comfortably, but generally without floors, which were used chiefly for lodging purposes. Still without this circle were campfires for cooking, and tables spread with provisions for the ample supply of the wants of all. Thus for nearly a week at a time, a large convocation gathered from

a wide circle are comfortably accommodated, where, owing to the sparseness of the population, it would be quite impossible to find entertainment for them in houses.

That such gatherings have often been greatly blest, that in certain situations of a widely dispersed community, they may be wise and right we cannot question. But that they are liable to dangerous and great abuses is equally obvious.²⁵

25 Baptist Memorial and Monthly Chronicle, November, 1843, p. 27-35.

Sunday Schools

The Sunday School has been one of the greatest forces in evangelical missionary endeavor. The Baptists were one of the first denominations to adopt it as a means for extending their influence and spreading their doctrines. The Baptists were the first evangelical group in Texas to organize a Sunday School. T. J. Pilgrim, a Baptist deacon, was the leader in such a movement at San Felipe, in 1829.²⁶

26 "The First Sunday School in Texas," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 39-41.

The Sunday School movement had begun with the work of Robert Raikes, a public-spirited citizen of Gloucester, England, in 1780. Observing the condition of the poor in the pin factory district in Gloucester, Raikes opened a school on the Sabbath, to provide instruction in reading and in the catechism of the Anglican Church for the poor

children of the district who were denied all other opportunities for formal instruction. He gave a missionary impulse to his project by the distribution of Bibles, testaments, religious tracts, and clothing. The movement spread rapidly in England, and had its inception in America in 1781, with the founding of the Sunday School Society of America in Philadelphia. Through the influence of the Philadelphia society, schools sprang up in various centers. The Methodists and Baptists took the Sunday School as a special means of meeting their needs for religious instruction. Early in 1824 the American Sunday School Union was organized. The leaders proposed to plant a Sunday School wherever there was a population large enough from which to draw. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a phenomenal growth in Sunday Schools and saw also the setting up of publishing concerns, by the various denominations, as a source of supply of literature and lesson materials.²⁷

27 Frederick Eby, Christianity and Education, 63-65.

Following the early enterprise of Pilgrim at San Felipe, the Baptists of Texas made the Sunday School a necessary adjunct of their missionary labor. The sparseness of population and the small number of members in the average frontier Baptist church made it next to impossible to operate a school in each church. In order to avoid not

having a school at all, the missionaries and other leaders adopted the expedient of providing union Sunday Schools with other denominations.²⁸

28 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 261-270.

The Civil War disrupted almost all of the Sunday Schools that were being operated at its beginning.²⁹ With

29 Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p. 9.

the meeting of the Union Association in 1865, that body proposed a general meeting among the Baptists for the purpose of reestablishing the work on a firm basis. The denomination reacted favorably to the suggestion of the association, and the representatives from twenty churches and seven Sunday Schools met at Washington, Texas, on October 28, 1865, and formed the Texas Baptist Sabbath School and Colportage Union. The new body set out as its objects the promotion of the Sunday School enterprise by providing the ways and means of establishing schools throughout the state, and the securing of a supply of books and literature for the use of pupils in the schools.³⁰

30 "The Sunday School and Colportage Convention," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 220-221.

Ten years later, on November 5, 1875, the Baptist General Association set up a like body at a meeting in Longview, Texas, and the two organizations functioned until their fusion in 1886.³¹

31 Ibid., 706.

In instituting and operating the Sunday Schools the Baptists faced, among other difficulties, the problem of securing capable leaders and of supplying literature. Capable teachers were hard to find. In one of the annual meetings of the Sabbath School and Colportage Convention the delegates considered the teacher problem. Practically all members were of the opinion that only regenerated persons should teach in a Sunday School. Dr. F. M. Law, President of Baylor Female College, took issue with them and advocated the use of any capable person, provided church members were not available. In this the college president was simply taking the sensible view of a practical question. The problem had to be faced by the missionaries every day in their efforts to establish this phase of mission work.³²

32 Ibid., 225-226.

With reference to literature the problem was acute. No firm in Texas engaged in publishing materials suitable for this type of work. Mail service to the United States prior to the Civil War was inadequate. Furthermore, the Baptists in the United States lagged in the publishing of literature that presented the Scriptures from the Baptist point of view. Finally, in 1840, the American Baptist Publication Society entered this field, and after the organization of the Domestic Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, that body undertook to act as agent for the Baptist publishing concern in the distribution of its literature. After the Civil War the American Baptist Publication Society inaugurated a policy of grants-in-aid to the Sunday School conventions. This practice greatly facilitated the matter of securing the proper aids, and the Sunday School movement among Texas Baptists assumed a greater importance. During the last decade of Byars' active missionary labors, he gave great emphasis to this method of reaching his constituencies.³³

³³ "Sunday School Convention of the General Association," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 706; Minutes, Salado Baptist Association, 1875, p.10; Texas Baptist, January 11, 1877.

Religious Literature

Emigrants from the United States brought relatively

few books with them to Texas. The church leaders themselves were open to censure, in this respect, as much as were the laity. Both groups offered as an excuse the long and arduous journey overland. Many of the emigrants had few books, at best, in their homes in the United States. The missionaries were among the first to recognize the dearth of literature; for they realized that, if their converts were to be indoctrinated, religious literature was an absolute necessity.³⁴ In the annual meeting of the

34 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 272.

Baptist General Association in 1872, Byars wrote the report on Colportage which expressed the true sentiments of Baptist missionaries. Among other things he said:

We regard the Press as an instrument in the hands of God, of priceless value in sowing the seeds of truth, . . . We regard the circulation of the Bible and sound religious literature of great importance.³⁵

35 Proceedings, Baptist General Association, 1872, p. 17.

Family Bibles were the possession of practically all heads of families; but as the younger people married and made homes for themselves, they were without even this all-important item, so necessary for religious instruction. To supply Bibles to their converts and church members was

an almost insuperable difficulty facing the missionaries. There was no Baptist society or institution in the United States publishing Bibles as a denominational agency prior to 1883. In fact, two rival groups within the brotherhood were hampering the work of each other from 1850 until 1883. ³⁶

³⁶ Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 428-433.

During the interval following the year, 1840, the American Baptist Publication Society acted as agent in circulating the standard English version of the Scriptures. It was upon this source that Texas Baptists relied for whatever Bibles the denomination secured and circulated. ³⁷

³⁷ Ibid.

Religious books, with a strictly Baptist flavor, circulated somewhat freely in the years following the Civil War. During this period, the associations practically all heard reports in their annual meetings on the subject of religious literature. In most cases the reports named specific works, which thus received the special blessing of the denomination. ³⁸

³⁸ Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 271-281.

Another method of missionary work was the distribution of religious tracts. "The need of religious tracts free from bias against Baptist teaching and inculcating Baptist principles came to be keenly felt early in the present period."³⁹ Other denominations, notably the

³⁹ Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, 427.

Methodists, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, had made effective use of this medium in their missionary work. Noah Davis, a graduate of Columbian College, urged the formation of a tract society as a Baptist venture in 1824. The Baptist leaders followed the suggestion of Davis and organized the Baptist General Tract Society in Washington, D. C. Two years later, in 1826, the headquarters of the society were moved to Philadelphia, from which place great quantities of publications were distributed.⁴⁰ In 1840 a revision of the constitution and a

⁴⁰ Ibid.

change of name to The American Baptist Publication Society gave the organization a wider range and a greater usefulness. This body was the source of supply for literature of this type upon which Texas Baptists depended. The

society distributed much of its material without cost and the remainder at a very nominal figure. So great was its influence on the frontier that leaders of other denominations appealed to it for donations of materials.⁴¹

⁴¹ Ibid., 427-428; J. M. Burke to the Society, June 16, 1839, in Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 272.

The problem of a Baptist newspaper engaged the attention of the leaders of the denomination at an early date. Church papers circulated freely in the sections of the United States from which the Baptists came. Certain of these papers followed them to Texas, but they did not circulate among the membership of the Baptists in general, and they did not fill the peculiar needs of Texas. Their news stories were those of the denomination in the states in which they were published. Texas Baptists desired Texas news. The initial meeting of the Baptist State Convention took note of the need for a newspaper. The cost of operating such a venture deferred action for several years. Finally, on January 1, 1855, The Texas Baptist made its appearance at Anderson, Texas, under the editorship of the Rev. G. W. Baines, Sr. It was a private venture and barely managed to live, although its circulation reached beyond two thousand subscribers. Scarcity of print paper during the Civil War forced its suspension,

and the Baptists were again without a news medium.⁴²

42 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 271-282.

With the close of the war in 1865, the desire among the Baptists for another newspaper manifested itself. Again an individual assumed the responsibility. The Rev. J. B. Link began the publication of The Texas Baptist Herald in Houston, Texas, in December, 1865.⁴³ Link's

43 "Baptist Newspapers in Texas," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 455-469.

paper had a wide circulation and had no competition from a Texas paper until Dr. R. C. Buckner began the publication of the Religious Messenger at Paris, Texas, in 1875. After less than a year Buckner moved his paper to Dallas and changed the name to The Texas Baptist. It circulated as a general newspaper for the Baptist General Association, and the editor used it as a special organ for arousing interest in favor of an orphanage which he had opened in Dallas.⁴⁴

44 Ibid.

The missionaries made much of the papers as a means of carrying on their work. Byars in particular, ardent partisan of Baptist doctrines that he was, urged his people to read the papers. His constant stream of short letters to the different publications also kept the denomination informed of his work in the different sections of the frontier.

Ministers' and Deacons' Conferences

During the earlier years of Byars' ministry he had to go almost single-handed. For two years he and Z. N. Morrell were the only Baptist ministers in the territory that was later to become the Trinity River Association.⁴⁵

45 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 277.

While Byars lived in Waco, Morrell and the Rev. John Claibough were his only ministerial brethren in the territory.⁴⁶

46 Texas Baptist, April 27, 1876 .

Under these conditions his task was hard, and his way was lonely. That he desired the companionship of his brethren in the ministry is plain in his communications to the newspapers, in which he constantly urged the sending of other preachers to the frontier.⁴⁷

47 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

During the later years of his ministry Byars made use of conferences held at irregular intervals, at which meetings ministers and laymen came together for one or two days and engaged in discussions that were designed to strengthen those participating, and the churches in general. A typical program of this type included a discussion on some phase of Baptist doctrine, an exposition of the methods of a Sunday School, the importance of family religion, and the responsibility of the laity to the church.⁴⁸

48 Texas Baptist Herald, August 21, 1873;
August 7, 1879.

CHAPTER VI

Missionary Difficulties

The Frontier

The story of the frontier in United States history begins in Jamestown, in 1607. The story ends with the peopling of the western plains area, in the closing years of the nineteenth century. This story finds its elements in the life of the people, the life of those men and women who emigrated from the older and more populous sections to the more remote regions. Their history is the chronicle of hopes, fears, difficulties, dangers, pathos, and triumphs. Phases of this chronicle have appealed to the imagination of almost countless writers who have given us separated details, but not a completed canvas. They have presented the hunter, with long rifle and knife, tracking down his kill. They have painted the trapper, clad in furs, plodding along the river banks, looking for animal runs. They have reviewed the pony-express rider, galloping across the continent, carrying precious letters and parcels. They have pictured the soldier, engaged with the wily savage, in the Indian's own country. They have thrown the mantle of glamour around the cowboy, standing herd at night. These they have all but institutionalized. On the other hand, these same writers have neglected some other phases of the frontier, phases, to be sure, less spectacular, unromantic, even prosaic, yet details in the full picture of the frontier.

Meager have been the descriptions of home life, of patient endurance, of hard work in a hostile environment, of hardihood in the face of seeming defeat. No Herodotus has arisen among us as the chronicler of the outposts of religion, the outposts where patient men gave themselves unreservedly, and wore themselves out in the service of their fellow-Frontiersmen. Practically all writers have neglected entirely, or have dismissed with a cursory treatment, the story of religion. They have overlooked the fact that "wherever white settlers have established homes in the early development of a country, ministers of the gospel were among the vanguard."¹ These religious trail-blazers performed their

1 Frank E. Simmons, History of Coryell County, 37.

tasks under difficulties that to other men, less enthusiastic, and without an inner urge to impel them, would have been insuperable. One of the most formidable of these difficulties was the frontier itself.

A definition of the frontier considers the sections that are farthest from the settled regions. It also includes the notion of a new land with elemental characteristics that are quite the opposite to those of the populous regions, where men mingle freely and supply their desires easily. All of Texas has been the frontier at one time or another. Within about two decades from the introduction of the first

colonists on the lower Brazos and Colorado Rivers, settlers had filtered northward and westward to a distance of almost a hundred miles. The choice of Austin as the capital of the republic in 1839, gave impetus to the movement in that direction.² Eastward from Austin toward the Brazos and

² Winkler, "The Seat of Government of Texas," in The Quarterly, X, 225-244.

Trinity Rivers, frontier settlements had sprung up in Robertson and Navarro counties. These settlements were small and isolated. In July, 1847, J. W. D. Creath, a missionary of the Domestic Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, rode one hundred miles to aid Z. N. Morrell and N. T. Byars in a meeting at Springfield, "then the outside town, and Limestone county then the outside county".³

³ Texas Baptist Herald, July 1, 1880.

The influx of great numbers of people caused the frontier to recede. This recessive movement was almost imperceptible at times, and in certain sections, while at other times, and in other sections, it was most noticeable. Those regions of Texas, which by their nature invited the farmer, filled up rapidly. Nine years after Creath, Morrell, and

Byars labored in "Limestone county then the outside county," Byars wrote from Birdville, in Tarrant county, of a "vast country lying high up on the Trinity and Brazos, where teeming multitudes are pouring in from Missouri, Arkansas, Ohio, Iowa, and other western states in almost incredible numbers, and that too, in the space of two years."⁴

⁴ Texas Baptist, December 12, 1855. The recession of the frontier, whether rapid or gradual, brought political problems which the lawmakers attempted to solve by the organization of new counties. Between 1849 and 1857 the legislature of Texas enacted laws setting up twenty-eight new counties along the western and northwestern frontiers. These measures anticipated a stable government for the counties involved, as well as a better protection against the Indians. Gammel, Laws of Texas, III, 468, 500, 501, 1490, 1492, IV, 183, 203, 207, 221.

Characteristic of the frontier were the distances. Not only were distances great between settlements, but also between homes in the same neighborhood. Distance, coupled with a sparse population, made missionary work all but impossible. In the first meeting of the West Fork Baptist Association in 1855, the committee on destitution reported that "there is great destitution from Bro. Byars' [Birdville, Tarrant County] to Belknap, consisting of a large portion of Parker, Wise, and Johnson Counties, there being not a preacher in either of these counties."⁵ It was

⁵ Minutes, West Fork Association, 1855, p. 9.

Byars' task to cover this territory on horseback. This he did, and, in doing so, he traveled more than three thousand miles in a single year.⁶ Distance remained a

6 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

characteristic of the frontier in each new recession. Traveling eastward from Coleman, in 1877, Byars, in one graphic sentence, set out the conditions confronting him. "After leaving Coleman I found no Baptist until I reached Brother Perry's, and had no church in his neighborhood."⁷

7 Texas Baptist, February 15, 1877. The Rev. J. M. Perry lived in Brown county at the time of which Byars wrote. The distance from Perry's home to Coleman was twenty-five miles.

Extremes of heat and cold, of flood and drouth, were the portions of the missionary. One of the ablest of the Baptist missionaries traveled three hundred miles monthly in reaching his appointments. It was necessary for him to cross two rivers on his monthly rounds, and neither stream boasted a ferry, and "many a time I was compelled not only to swim the main stream, but also in the low lands adjacent."⁸

8 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 233.

Frontier missionaries had a message. That message was for their fellows. They must deliver it, and circumstances that kept them from their task made them restless. The winter of 1857 was extremely cold. Writing to the Texas Baptist on February 4, 1857, N. T. Byars reported that frozen trails had kept him at home for seven days, and those seven days meant so many days wasted.

The remarkable thing is that the missionary remained at his task. "It is all right"⁹ seems to have been the

9 Melinda Rankin, Texas, 1850, p. 75.

consensus of opinion among them. "Week in and week out the tireless worker sped. The weather, winter and summer, did not deter him. Many times drenched with rain, or half-frozen with cold, the sturdy messenger of the Gospel was undaunted. The long weary rides, the raging torrents to ford, the diversity of fare, the cold sleeping quarters, the crowded homes visited, with their lack of comforts, all tested the physique and mettle of the minister."¹⁰

10 Dick, The Sod-House Frontier, 1850-1890, pp. 336-337

Social Conditions

A large amount of the literature about the frontier has depicted it in terms of romance, the romance of the

unusual, the extraordinary, the new. There were unusual characteristics. Nowhere else were found the unusual colloquialisms of shootin'-irons for fire-arms, of cow-pony for horse, of cow-brute for cow, of clever for accommodating, of "techous" for irritable, and of "varmint" for small animal.¹¹ Life was extraordinary. Nowhere else

11. R. C. Buley, "Glimpses of Pioneer Mid-West Social and Cultural History," in Mississippi Valley Historical Quarterly, XXIII, 481-510.

were men called upon to set up institutions of protection with no semblance of a pattern to guide them. Life was also new, new in its environment, new in its associations, new in its promise. Stripping away, however, the tinsels of adornment, and examining the fabric closely, we find that, if the woof was romantic, the warp was prosaic, cold, harsh, material. Life on the frontier was a struggle.

The homes of the settlers were small, rude structures made of logs, notched at the ends to fit them snugly, one upon the other. The cracks between the logs were filled with mud. If lime were available, a mortar was used which lasted much longer than mud. The cabin usually had but one door. Glass windows were uncommon until the later years. Window shutters, made of boards, were the vogue. Some houses had board or puncheon floors. Many had no floors except the bare earth. Board shingles covered the

building. In those regions where large timber was not available, settlers lived in tents, and "dug-outs." The "dug-out" was a half-house. The owner dug out a square in the earth as large as he desired to a depth of four or five feet. Using such materials as were available, he then built the walls above ground to whatever height he wished. The roof he added, and a snug home was the result.¹²

12 Texas Baptist, April 6, 1876.

Life afforded little opportunity for idleness on the frontier. Practically all settlers owned herds of both cattle and horses. These demanded attention. Round-ups in the spring and autumn for the purpose of branding were necessary. Crops of corn and oats for feed, and of wheat for bread, had to be planted, cultivated, and harvested. Trips to mill, many times long trips they were, had to be made. Butchering of the meat supply was no small task. The winter's supply of firewood called for hard labor with axe, and saw, and maul. Fences, built of split rails, were the settler's protection for his crops against cattle and horses, and herds of deer that roamed the hills. These labors and multitudinous small jobs occupied the attention of the men and boys. Women and girls were just as busy.

At home more, with certain types of domestic work, such as spinning, which might have been a blessing at times, denied her because of a supply of raw cotton, and too much other work, with responsibilities

for the safety of the children in the absence of her man, and the worry over the absent and those present, there was some grounds for the old saying that early Texas was "hell on women and horses." Even where there was some help from a few negro women, the duties of the household were trying on the women's physical strength. But very few families in our section owned any negroes, and during hard times these were frequently hired out. Keeping the house clean, food prepared, washing done, quilts made, rendering the lard when her husband killed hogs, and in the absence of the men, perhaps cutting wood and carrying water as well as looking after the stock about the house, was only a portion of the work of the women along the frontier in central Texas. 13

13 J. K. Greer, (ed.), A Texas Ranger and Frontiersman, The Days of Buck Barry in Texas, 1845-1906, pp. 72-89.

Communication was difficult. Travel was slow. There were few roads. Bridges were unknown. Where streams had to be crossed, they were forded. The fords all came to be called "crossings". Every crossing had its name. More often than not, the name assigned was that of the owner of the land along the stream, although, in some instances, the name was geographical in origin. The Cobb Crossing on the lower San Gabriel, the Holtzclaw Crossing on Little River, the Kimball Crossing on the upper Brazos, the Keese Crossing on the upper Colorado were fords known to every frontier settler. Ox-drawn wagons were common. These were protective measures in one sense, since Indian raiding parties always stole horses. The savages had no use for oxen. Many a settler escaped attack and owed his life to

the slow-moving oxen.¹⁴ Mail service was irregular. Lone

14 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 317-326.

carriers on horseback traveled the stretches of the frontier to bring the settler his letters, and his secular and religious newspapers that were already old when he received them.¹⁵

15 T. R. Havins, The History of Brown County, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1931, p. 49.

The stable, hard-working settlers were friendly to the missionary, and it was among them that he did his best work. There were, however, among the sparse population certain types who were unfriendly to the missionary, and a downright hindrance to him in his efforts. Some few were openly hostile. Disturbance of public worship occurred at intervals, though not often.¹⁶ Others, by their

16 Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 82-83; Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, 52.

criminal behavior, distracted the citizenry to the extent of nullifying the preacher's efforts among the better class along the entire frontier. As the number of stock increased, stealing became an organized, but nefarious, business.

Cattle and horse thieves in several counties banded together. Stealing in one section, they drove the stock to another place and left them in the hands of others of their group. These in turn drove the cattle or horses farther on. Thus by relays, they succeeded in getting away with much valuable property. So great were the losses to stockmen, and so great was the resentment against stock theft, that the citizenry sought by various means to eradicate it. The first thought seems to have been to call upon the state for protection.¹⁷ Almost invariably this proved

¹⁷ Wilson Hey to Governor Richard Coke, June 25, 1874, in Adjutant General's Papers, Correspondence of Major John B. Jones, Archives State Library, Austin; G. A. Beeman et al to Governor Richard Coke, May 28, 1874, in Ibid.; T. R. Havins "The Passing of the Frontier in Brown County," in West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, VIII, 43-50.

ineffective. Determined to rid themselves of the undesirables, the leading men formed vigilance committees, and took the law into their own hands. The Vigilantes struck silently and swiftly. A few cryptic sentences from the diary of a Bosque county citizen portray graphically their method of meting out retribution. "Looked after general welfare of the community and was at public meeting of the Citizens of Bosque, Erath, Johnson, and Hill counties near Mr. Lott's on the Brazos in which various resolutions were adopted to rid our country of thieves and cutthroats.

One that C_____ should be publicly hanged on the 10 of August near the line of Erath and Bosque." Three days later a group of about one hundred citizens met at the appointed place, and "after some arrangements and deliberation of the committee C_____ was led out by over 100 men and hung to a post oak." The next three weeks a posse of six men and a boy spent in a ride of several hundred miles, on the trail of other thieves. Upon their return, they spent several days conferring with the Vigilance committee of Waco. After long deliberation "G_____ was finally given up to us, when we left with him in company of several others. After traveling about a mile he requested of us the privilege of praying which was granted (;) he than requested that his body should be left above the ground whereupon he was left hanging to a liveoak limb, etc."18

18 J. K. Greer (Ed.), "The Diary of James Buckner Barry," in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI, 154.

Drastic as were these actions of the Vigilantes, they did not always resort to hanging of the culprits. "Not a few were hunted down, the evidence collected, carefully examined and when it seemed to warrant, measures taken commensurate with the case; most usually the offender got a warm invitation to 'vamoose', which he quickly accepted. Sometimes, when the evidence of guilt was only of a slightly suspicious character, he would merely get

some good advice, resulting frequently in making a reasonably good citizen of him."¹⁹

19 Thomas T. Ewell, A History of Hood County, 45-46 .

The cattle and horse thieves were not the only reprehensible characters, "Gamblers, swindlers, and prostitutes were common figures in frontier towns; and it is doubtful if there ever was a stage road in the West which was not infested with one or more highwaymen."²⁰ An English visitor's

20 G. C. Rister, "Outlaws and Vigilantes of the Southern Plains, 1865-1885," in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIX, 537-554 .

description of a Texas town of the frontier period included saloons with gambling appurtenances, filled to capacity with a "depraved, adventurous crowd, whose profanity was appalling."²¹ Liquor flowed freely in every

21 Edward King, The Southern States of North America, 177.

town. Comanche boasted seven saloons in 1874, though the population of the entire county was less than one thousand.²²

22 J. W. Hardin, The Life of John Wesley Hardin, 37-39.

Brownwood was little better. "Ford Nairn's 'O O' Saloon and gambling house on the south side of the square was known far and wide. R. R. (Happy Jack) Young's place on the west side of the square was just as popular, and just as well known. Gradually, the liquor business invaded East Broadway Street, until scarcely any other business was found along it for the space of three blocks. So boisterous were the crowds in the saloons, and so flagrant were the violations of the law, that the street came to be known as 'Battle Row'.²³

23 T. R. Havins, The History of Brown County, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1931, 98.

The Frontiersman depended much upon horses. The horse was an indispensable asset. The poorest man in the region owned a horse. Naturally, any sport in which horses were involved appealed to the men. Horse-racing was common. Every town had its race track, and wagering on the races was a common practice. If we can accept the statement of one of the frontier's worst braggarts and killers, men wagered large sums on the races. Some of them even risked their own precious mounts. "The 26th of May [1874] saw a big crowd at the races, the news of which had been published all over the country. 'Rondo' ran first and won easily. 'Shiloh' came in next and had

a walk-over. Next came 'Dock', which was a close race, but he won by six feet. I won about \$3000 in cash, fifty head of cattle, a wagon or two, and fifteen head of saddle horses. I set more than one man afoot, and then loaned them the horses to ride home."²⁴

24 J. W. Hardin, Life of John Wesley Hardin, 36.

Not only did horse-racing detract from the work of the ministers of the gospel, but it also proved, on certain occasions, a direct hindrance to their work. N. T. Byars reported from Hamilton county, in 1876, that a racing program had kept him from making an appointment to preach in one locality.²⁵ Although the church organizations had

25 Texas Baptist, November 6, 1876.

many opposing influences with which to deal, liquor and gambling were the hardest to overcome.²⁶

26 Ben O. Grant, "Life at Old Fort Griffin," in West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, X, 40.

Educational advantages on the frontier were poor. There were few schools, and the term lasted only three or four months. Many localities had no schools of any nature.

The missionaries felt the need for education. They sought to arouse an interest in education by fostering denominational schools.²⁷ In the later years of the frontier era,

27 Texas Baptist, May 17, 1856 .

when the support of public schools by the state came to be accepted, the ministers of all evangelical denominations urged their members to support the schools.²⁸

28 Sometime between 1867 and 1870 the town of Brownwood was moved to its present site. Judge Greenleaf Fisk donated one hundred acres of land for county purposes. Under the influence of two Methodist preachers, he sold a section of land adjoining the townsite for one dollar per acre to a citizen of Brown county who had a family of five children, on condition that this citizen would live on the land and make possible the opening of the first school in the town. Havins, The History of Brown County, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1931, p. 37.

The Indians

The subject of Indian depredations in Texas has been, in many instances, the central theme around which writers have built their stories. Especially is this true of the reminiscences of the frontiersmen. The explanation of this is quite obvious. The settlers experienced the horror of the savage intrusions. Protection of themselves and their families was their greatest problem. Naturally, the Indian became very real to them, and those things that are real are the things that men cherish. They cherish them

either as material substances or as a written record, and the written record is more potent in its influence than material substance, because of its appeal to the emotional and the spiritual in man. Thus the Indian's place in pioneer life has come to be somewhat legendary, and certainly traditional.

The story of the Indian as a political problem has no place in this narrative. The problem existed, and, because it existed, it kept the frontier in constant peril. The cruelty of the Indians seems almost incomprehensible. A contemporary of the period noted this characteristic, but he offered no satisfactory reason for its manifestation. He rather sought an explanation by falling back on the age-old argument of heredity. "The cruelty of the Indian is inexplicable," he wrote, "except on the hypothesis that cruelty is a normal trait of humanity."²⁹

²⁹ Richard Irving Dodge, The Hunting Grounds of the Great West, 416.

This trait manifested itself in the most revolting forms, and the Indians exulted in perpetrating their atrocities on their victims. "As a man," wrote Colonel Dodge, "the torture of a human being gives him more pleasure than any other act of his life."³⁰ Along with his barbarous practices,

30 Ibid.

the Indian was also a notorious thief. Again, we present the testimony of Dodge, who said, "In the estimation of the Indian, the skilful thief stands very nearly, if not quite, on par with the daring fighter."³¹

31 Ibid., 401.

A Methodist circuit rider, whose work on the frontier began during the Civil War, paints a vivid picture of the rigor of the Indian raids. "The Indians were constantly visiting and depredating in the country, the population of which was small and scattering, and we were too weak to protect ourselves against the foe."³² These

³² Peter W. Gravis, Twenty-five Years on the Outside Row, 36.

visits resulted in murders of whites, captivity of women and children, burning of homes, and driving off of both cattle and horses in large numbers.³³ During the winter

³³ Ibid., 36.

of 1859 Byars reported that the presence of Indian raiding parties had kept him out of much of his missionary field.³⁴

34 Texas Baptist, May 19, 1859.

In March and April, 1860, the red men came into Palo Pinto, Parker, Erath, and Bosque counties in such numbers, and committed so many thefts and murders, that the whole region became aroused. Armed bands of settlers followed them northwestward for hundreds of miles.³⁵ Parker county

35 J. K. Greer (ed.), "The Diary of James Buckner Barry, 1860-1862," in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI, 144-147.

was the heart of Byars' missionary field, after his removal from Waco in 1854. Within a radius of one hundred miles of this county, it is estimated that the Indians killed, scalped, or carried away over four hundred persons during the two decades, from 1854 to 1874.³⁶

36 G. A. Holland, The Double Log Cabins, Being a Brief Symposium of the Early History of Parker County, pp. 9-10.

Various attempts by the state authorities, and by the federal government, at holding the Indians in check had proved futile. This left the frontier without ade-

quate protection. Constant harassment by the savages forced the settlers to arm themselves. The men wore pistols and carried rifles on their saddles. Every home had its fire-arms and a supply of bullets and powder for the use of the women, in case of attack, while the men were away from home. Ministers of the gospel went armed as did all other men. "Those green from the states opened their eyes in amazement when they saw the men all coming into the church with their six-shooters buckled to their waists; but with greatly increased astonishment when the preacher rose up and took his place by the sacred stand, placed his pistols or Winchester on the desk and, taking his Bible from his saddle-bags, began the services."³⁷ Elisha

³⁷ Ewell, History of Hood County, 73.

Childress, a Methodist missionary, who labored for many years on the northwestern frontier, gained the sobriquet of "the bear-hunter preacher". If we can credit contemporary records, he carried a veritable arsenal with him on his journeys.³⁸

³⁸ F. M. Cross, Early Days in Central Texas, 84-85.

It was not until after the organization of the Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers, in 1874, that the

Indians ceased to harass the frontier, and the region became safe for both life and property.³⁹

39 Gammel, Laws of Texas, VIII, 84-91. The Frontier Battalion was made up of six companies of seventy-five men each. Governor Richard Coke appointed Major John B. Jones commander. Jones stationed detachments all along the frontier from Red River to the Rio Grande. So effective was the work of this force that the companies were reduced in numbers from seventy-five to twenty-five in November, 1874. Havins, "Activities of Company E, Frontier Battalion, Texas Rangers, 1874-1880," in West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XI, 62-72.

The Civil War

War is, without question, the most ruinous activity in which men engage. More often political in its nature than otherwise, it changes political institutions, overthrows social orders, brings economic bankruptcy, paralyzes religious life, and breeds hatred that lingers for generations. The Civil War in the United States from 1861 to 1865 was no exception. The losing South fought courageously throughout the four years of the duration. After the break-up of the Confederacy the humiliation of reconstruction began, and continued in Texas for a period of eight years. But that is another story.

When the war opened in 1861, Baptists in Texas were a numerous people as compared with the general population. In 1860 there were two hundred and eighty Baptist church organizations in the state. The property owned by Baptists had a valuation of two hundred twenty-eight thousand dollars.

The membership of the various churches was between fifty and sixty thousand.⁴⁰ Naturally, so large a group would

⁴⁰ Census Report, Ninth Census, United States, Population I, 507. The census report lists only the number of churches. In 1870 the number of church members amounted to a few more than sixty-seven thousand. A normal growth in the ten years would have amounted to some fifteen thousand members.

seek to exert an influence on public questions, and this the Baptists did. They were heart and soul in favor of the Confederacy. The Baptist State Convention, in its earlier years, held its meetings on week-ends and continued in session for two or three days of the following week. In these instances it was customary for Baptist ministers in attendance on the convention to preach in the various churches of the town in which the meetings of the body were held. To facilitate matters there was always a committee on preaching and devotional services. At the meeting in 1861 the committee on preaching made its report, and *announced that special prayer would be offered to the God of battles for our beloved Confederacy. Accordingly prayer was offered in the various places of preaching for the success of our arms and for a speedy and honorable peace."⁴¹

⁴¹ Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1861, p. 8-9.

The Little River Association at its meeting the same year was even more specific than the convention.

Whereas, an unrighteous and unholy war has been declared, and is at present being waged against us by the United States of the North; and, whereas, they seem determined to prosecute it with a vigor and barbarity unknown to civilized nations; and, whereas, we believe God to be the God of Providence as well as grace; be it therefore resolved that we affectionately ask the churches belonging to the Association to spend one hour of the Sabbath morning of each of their regular meetings in prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God for having given our brave soldiers so many signal victories on the battlefield, and pray for His special blessings for our ultimate success in the defense of our liberties, our religion, and our country. 42

42 Minutes, Little River Association, 1861, p. 7.

By 1862 the Baptists were even more militant. In the meeting of Union Association, the oldest Baptist general body in the state, a committee, whose membership included some of the notable Baptist leaders in Texas, reported that "we most fully endorse and approve the course pursued by our own State in secession, also the formation of the Confederate Government, and we accept and receive the constitution of the same and the laws and acts of Congress generally, as a denomination, as we have already done as individuals." The report further set out the unholy nature of the war, and denounced in scathing language the destruction of towns, and confiscation of property, and the indignities aimed at "lovely and amiable

women". In closing the report the committee revealed the lengths to which the Baptists would go in their resistance. "If need be, we will burn our cotton, spread destruction before the enemy, spend the last dollar, shed the last drop of blood, but be subjugated, never! never! never!"⁴³

43 Minutes, Union Association, 1862, p. 8.

Whatever time the various Baptist groups spent in passing resolutions, this activity was not the whole of their interest in the war. The Baptist State Convention sent special missionaries to the army, asked the churches to set aside one-tenth of their collections as a fund with which to buy testaments for the soldiers, and called upon the individual members of the churches to give Bibles and other religious literature for the use of the men in the field.⁴⁴

44 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 321-325.

The results of the war and reconstruction upon Baptist work were manifold. The opening of the war and its consequent influence on life in general brought a cessation of many activities. The Baptist State Convention withdrew all but two missionaries from its fields in 1861. Efforts on the frontier ceased. The general body

simply refused to remember that the frontier existed.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Proceedings, Baptist State Convention 1861-1862, p. 8. During the interval between 1860 and 1870 the records of the convention were sometimes published as Proceedings and sometimes as Minutes. The records for 1861 and 1862 were published as one volume in 1862.

Another hindrance to missionary activity was the withdrawal of the men from civil life. Many of the ministers went to the army, and this resulted in a suspension of preaching among the churches. In 1868 the Baptist General Association embraced a territory from the Brazos River on the west, to the line of Louisiana on the east, and from Red River on the north, to the region of Waco on the south. The general agent of the body reported that only two churches within this territory had preaching every Sunday. "Several that were self-sustaining previous to the late war are now extinct, and many of the most important towns and neighborhoods are without Baptist churches."⁴⁶ Sunday

⁴⁶ Proceedings, Baptist General Association, 1868, 6.

School work was all but abandoned, and the only Baptist newspaper ceased its issue for the want of print paper.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 317.

The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptists that had instituted the first organized work among Baptists in Texas no longer attempted any mission work.⁴⁸ The local asso-

48 Ibid., 463.

ciations attempted some work, but it was spasmodic, for they had to depend upon the pastors within their borders, and these had as much as they could do in caring for their own churches.⁴⁹

49 Ibid.

The years immediately following the war were years of great trial in Texas. When General Granger, the representative of the Union Army in Texas, arrived in Galveston on June 19, 1865, and issued his proclamation declaring all former slaves free, there was great confusion. Many Negroes, who had previously made contracts to work for their former master, now broke their contracts and began to wander aimlessly about the country. This caused an acute labor shortage. Added to this, the Freedman's Bureau officials came in and incensed the white citizenry.⁵⁰ Slaves on the

50 G. W. Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, 44-49.

frontier were never very numerous. In eight counties northward from Bell county there were only eleven hundred and eighty slaves in 1860.⁵¹ These same counties had a

⁵¹ Census Report, Eighth Census, 1860, United States, Population, I, 478.

white population of nine thousand and eighteen.⁵² Thus

⁵² Ibid.

the whites outnumbered the slaves nearly eight to one. This preponderance of numbers was, perhaps, the reason that the frontier counties had so little trouble with the Negroes during the years following the war, as compared with the counties where the colored population was great.

Previous to the Civil War, all evangelical bodies in Texas had done missionary work among the slave population. The Rev. A. Buffington, the second Baptist minister to be ordained in Texas, served as a missionary for the Baptist State Convention to the slaves.⁵³ Local pastors baptized

⁵³ "Sketch of the Life of Anderson Buffington," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 296.

them into the membership of the churches, and the missionaries in the sparsely settled regions did the same.⁵⁴

54 Minutes, Salado Association, 1876, p. 14.

During the war it was the accepted policy of the Baptists to continue the practice. However, certain safeguards for the ministers who preached to the Negroes were in evidence.⁵⁵ The free Negro in 1865 changed all this. No

55 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 329.

longer did the Baptists accept the colored people as members of white churches. They insisted that the former slaves must have their own churches. Moreover, they also demanded that a colored ministry should officiate in the colored churches, a demand impossible to be met since there were fewer than a dozen colored Baptist preachers in Texas when the war closed. These changed conditions resulted in a woeful degradation of the Negroes spiritually. They had the barest religious instruction.⁵⁶

56 Ibid., 337-345.

Religious Controversy

The emigrants who settled Texas were of diverse religious views. As the numbers increased, and as churches were formed within the various groups of religionists,

the leaders of each group began an effort to augment their numbers. None of the denominations boasted large numbers in any community. The preachers put forward the doctrines of their own churches. Naturally, this led to jealousies and animosities, resulting in the rankest forms of denominationalism. An observer of this tendency wrote: "It is a melancholy fact there is a party spirit manifested which is entirely unbecoming the spirit of the religion of Christ."⁵⁷

57 Melinda Rankin, Texas 1850, p. 98.

The religious press of the day did more than all other agencies toward keeping alive the spirit of controversy. By opening their columns to discussions the editors encouraged the theme. The Texas Baptist Herald, which was published in Houston by J. B. Link, was a thirty-inch, eight-column paper. In the issue of February 3, 1869, this publication carried a front-page, full-column editorial entitled "Sacramental Efficacy - The Campbellite View." The editor defined regeneration as a change, not only of the mind, but also of the affections. In following a declaration of a rational belief, he accused the followers of Alexander Campbell of lacking the essentials of salvation, and finally declared that they had no belief at all. The Tennessee Baptist was a twenty-four-inch, six-column paper that circulated widely among the Baptists of Texas. The

Rev. J. R. Graves was editor of this publication, and his doctrinal preaching and writing were characteristic of the times. In the issue of April 4, 1867, this paper published a four-column article on "Popish Phases of Presbyterianism". In the same issue is to be found a half-column diatribe against the Presbyterians for practicing open communion.

The Methodists came in for their share of criticism, as did the followers of Alexander Campbell and the Presbyterians. In a signed article, entitled "Methodist Hospital", the Texas Baptist Herald gave circulation to the following:

At a protracted meeting, not far from Oakland, some time ago one of their ministers said the church was a hospital into which the sick, the halt, the lame, the blind, &, were to be received, that they might be nursed and healed. He then urged all kinds of sinners to enter the hospital, that they might be doctored and healed.

This will do very well for a description of a Methodist Society. And if they would liberate them from the hospital when they are healed or converted, and urge them to join the army of the Lord, the true church of God, I would have no particular objection to their hospital. But to keep all the soldiers in the hospital all the time is a strange procedure for an army. If in doctoring the sick in their hospital, they would use better remedies, and not mix so much poison with their food and medicine, they would turn out more good soldiers to the army of the Lord than they do. The Methodist Church then is a hospital for the morally diseased. This is their own description of it. So soon, therefore, as the diseased in that hospital get well, we invite them to come over and unite with us in the church of God, which admits none but those who are healed by Christ, converted to God. In the church of God you will have more pleasant employment than nursing the sick all the time, and more agreeable fare than is common in hospitals. (58)

The hardest-working missionaries of the Baptists in Texas were N. T. Byars and Z. N. Morrell. Both were strong doctrinal preachers. In the issue of the Tennessee Baptist of September 2, 1854, a writer from Texas called attention to the spread of the Baptist doctrines among other sects. He used "still they come" to indicate the growth of the Baptists at the expense of other denominations. The editor appended a paragraph to the article and pointed out the danger of schism as the result of admitting those not completely converted to Baptist principles. Under date of December 9, 1854, Byars wrote to editor Graves and spoke his mind. "I was glad to see in your paper of September 2d, a piece over the signature of M, followed by a few remarks of your own calling the attention of Baptists to that God-dishonoring, devil-exalting doctrine of final apostacy. However much we may love that little sentence, 'And still they come', I never want to read it again unless it announces the coming of one who is sound in faith, who is established on Baptist and Bible principles."

Byars went on to give his experience with a minister who had come from Tennessee, and who had come out openly for the doctrine of final apostacy. He spoke of another preacher whom he had recently met in Collin county. This man had recently received ordination in East Texas. The presbytery had felt some misgivings as to his soundness of doctrine, but having learned that he expected to go to the

frontier, had ordained him. Byars concluded his communication:

Dear Brethren, you who are settled over churches in well-regulated societies perhaps little know how arduous the task of organizing churches from a heterogenous mass of discordant elements, thrown together as most of the frontiers are, all bringing their peculiar prejudices with them; but how immensely great is the trouble increased when there is heresy in the ministry; giving a wrong tone to society and an improper direction to the tenets of our church. Better far, my brethren, ordain two ministers of doubtful character and doubtful principles to labor amongst you where society is already regulated, than one to come where there is yet to be tone given to society, and proper direction to the tenets of the church.

The denominational leaders led the fight for doctrinal supremacy, and the lesser-known ministers took it up and intensified it in the local communities. On January 1, 1859, Byars, John Turner, and S. Baldwin ordained Joseph Robertson as a Baptist minister.⁵⁹ Robertson spent the

59 Texas Baptist, February 24, 1859.

remainder of his life in Hood county. He gained the title of "Fighting Joe" for his religious contentions.

His character was the most single in its kind. Inspired by deep convictions of the righteousness of the doctrines of the Baptist Church, he vehemently preached that it had its inception on the Jordan under the ministration of John the Baptist, upon Christ the head; that its apostolic succession had been duly and divinely preserved through the dark ages in the mountains and caves of Europe and handed down to the present; that besides this there was no other way; and that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it', was spiritually applicable to the

Baptist Church.⁶⁰

60 Ewell, History of Hood County, 45.

Debates between ministers of the different denominations were common. Two ministers, agreeing to debate their points of doctrine, would arrange the place and date to which "a large concourse of people assembled at the arbor--men came twenty miles--Campbellites, Presbyterians, Baptists, and sinners".⁶¹

61 Gravis, Twenty-five Years on the Outside Row, 38-40.

In the earlier years of Baptist work in Texas, it was a practice of the associations to order some delegate to write a circular letter, which was sent to other associations. In most instances, these letters were arguments from the Baptist point of view on points of doctrine.⁶²

62 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 285-298.

In 1853, J. W. D. Creath wrote the circular letter for Union Association on the subject of infant salvation. This letter came to the attention of the Rev. Daniel Baker, a notable Presbyterian leader, who published a pamphlet on infant baptism in reply to Creath. Upon the

publication of Baker's pamphlet, Creath challenged him to a debate. Baker accepted, and the discussions were held in the Baptist church in Huntsville. The whole of the population was in an uproar. Commenting on the outcome of the week's discussion, Creath wrote to editor J. R. Graves, of the Tennessee Baptist: "The writer was 'dreadfully whipped' here last spring in the discussion of infant baptism and the mode of baptism by Elder Daniel Baker, D.D. (Old School Presbyterian), according to 'Flying Leaves'. But it somehow happens that the Baptists gather the fruit at the end."⁶³

⁶³ Tennessee Baptist, April 8, 1854.

Invariably, the debates left the frontier in an uproar, and the churches in much worse condition. Cooperative efforts were impossible because of the denominational jealousies aroused. They nullified the missionary's efforts among the unconverted, and proved an impediment to mission work of all types.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Graves, Twenty-five Years on the Outside Row, pp. 38-40.

On occasions the ministers would refuse to debate and would content themselves with caustic remarks through the denominational press. The Rev. J. W. D. Creath was the

general agent of the Baptist State Convention for many years. His duties took him to all parts of the state. Late in 1859, he was in East Texas. While in that section, he attended a Methodist meeting where the Rev. James E. Scott was delivering a series of lectures. Creath listened for nearly four hours on "The Origin of Immersion, The Baptists, etc." Writing to the Texas Baptist, Creath expressed his reactions to the lecture. "But when he undertook to refute the above, he surpassed anything I have ever listened to in perverting facts and history and unkind expressions and comparisons."⁶⁵ Creath did not pro-

65 Texas Baptist, January 12, 1860.

pose to pass the matter over without a reply. Accordingly, he suggested that a debate be arranged between the Rev. Mr. Scott and himself. Someone clipped Creath's article and sent it to Scott. Under date of January 19, 1860, Scott wrote editor Baines of the Texas Baptist, and declined to debate Creath for two reasons. The first he assigned as Creath's low mentality and deliberate misrepresentations. The second was that, according to the Proverbs of Solomon, one should "answer not a fool according to his own folly." He closed his article by saying, "I feel that I can afford to indulge the Rev. J. W. D. Creath. He only beslimes his own pathway, and I cheerfully leave

him to his dirty avocation."⁶⁶

66 Texas Baptist, January 19, 1860.

Harsh criticisms of the different denominations were common. An eminent Methodist presiding elder, who spent many years on the northwestern frontier, relieved his feelings thus: "I never heard the mourners' bench and straw altars condemned until after I had obtained a conscious salvation. Thank God I never heard a Campbellite preach and but few Baptists. The former had no mourners' bench; the latter nothing else."⁶⁷

67 Gravis, Twenty-five Years on the Outside Row, 6.

Weak as were the churches, cooperation between them did not exist. As an example of this condition a notable Methodist leader wrote: "I began pouring oil on the troubled waters, first, by preaching love; secondly, by organizing a union prayer-meeting, to be held weekly. The Baptist members joined in the meeting, and this made B_____ fight the harder. He abused the prayer-meeting and his members called them tender-toed coyotes--and called Methodist preachers anything but Christian gentlemen."⁶⁸

68 Ibid., 34-35.

Facing the difficulties recited, great wonder it is that the frontier missionaries accomplished as much as they did. They were a hardy group. Inured to hardships, they faced their tasks heroically. Only at times do we find a note of complaint. They saw the fringe as it was, and their brethren in the center of the settled regions had little conception of the frontier. Occasionally, some missionary sensed this lack of understanding and voiced his reaction. "Either come here and preach, or help me to preach," Byars wrote from Parker county, in 1856.⁶⁹

69 Texas Baptist, June 10, 1856.

In his loneliness he requested the prayers of his brethren in 1857.⁷⁰ Years afterward he sought to enlighten them on

70 Ibid., February 4, 1857.

the conditions and the needs, and to inspire them to action. "What Christian can look over this vast field of wide spread destitution and not weep over it as the Savior did over Jerusalem. We have men among us whose hearts burn with love for the cause, but whose hands are chained to the plow handles, who would gladly exchange the plow for the pulpit if they could only see their wives and children clothed

and fed.⁷¹

⁷¹ Texas Baptist Herald, June 10, 1879.

The salary of a frontier missionary was meager. The matter of low salaries was not confined to the Baptists. Conditions were the same in all other evangelical groups. When Byars accepted appointment from the board of directors of the Baptist State Convention in 1849, his salary amounted to one hundred dollars a year.⁷² This salary remained the

⁷² Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1851, p.

same as long as he continued in the service of the convention.⁷³ He never received more than five hundred dollars

⁷³ Ibid.

a year during his forty years of missionary labors. Much of the time he received a great deal less. The missionaries and other ministers were partly to blame for the low salaries. From the very beginning of Baptist work in Texas, evangelism received great emphasis. Baptist preachers went everywhere, visiting in the homes of the settlers, preaching to the people, and baptizing the converts. Their families remained at home. The wife and children raised a crop and

earned the living. Small gifts came to the minister. Most of the time the gifts were in the form of goods, rather than in money. The minister accepted them gratefully, and, as a result, the churches came to feel that whatever the ministers received was sufficient. Added to this, the missionary boards, many times, failed to pay the salary when it was due. The associations were very negligent in this respect. Nothing this tendency in 1876, the editor of the Texas Baptist called attention to it in a signed editorial, which he closed with these words: "N. T. Byars, who recently lost his wife, needs his salary. Couldn't it be paid quarterly?"⁷⁴ Even the convention boards were not

⁷⁴ Texas Baptist, November 23, 1876.

blameless. When the General Missionary Association expanded its home mission efforts in 1877, the funds with which to pay the missionaries were not always forthcoming. In 1879 and again in 1880, the general agent, Dr. R. C. Buckner, paid the deficits from his private funds.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Proceedings, Baptist General Missionary Association 1879, p. 14; Ibid., 1880, p. 17.

CHAPTER VII

Missionary Accomplishments

Churches and Associations

The true and exact value of religious endeavor can hardly be measured in terms of tangible objects. This is especially true of those evangelical bodies which lay much stress on the emotional nature as a factor in the religious experience. The spiritual accomplishment in the individual church member is unpredictable. There is no means of measuring spiritual values except as they manifest themselves in the life of the individual. Having a strong predilection for mysticism, and appealing strongly to the emotional in their converts, the Baptists have found difficulty in evaluating their accomplishments. The only objective inventory they have been able to take lies in those fields where comparisons can be drawn, or where numbers can be counted. On the other hand, certain frontier missionary accomplishments had such a decided social significance that their influence is obvious.

The most notable accomplishment in Byars' ministry was, without question, the great number of churches he established. If we credit him with full activity for the last year in the pastorate, he actually served forty-four years in the ministry. During that time he organized¹ "more than sixty churches." The exact number cannot be

¹ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

determined. Just before the close of 1878 he had organized fifty-eight churches. His own report fixes the number.² His work was almost finished at that time,

2 Ibid., November 21, 1878.

hence the term, "more than sixty," could not have meant many in excess of that number. In addition to our not being able to determine the number of his churches, so, also, we cannot determine their location. A few of them we do know. A vast majority we do not know. This lack of information is due to two circumstances. Byars failed, in many instances, to report his efforts in the Baptist press. On the other hand, the churches, in reporting to the associations, failed to state what minister had organized the bodies. Byars confined his missionary efforts, if we disregard the Civil War years when he was a pastor of churches, to the Northwestern frontier. Since this is true, we surmise that practically all churches, organized as a result of his activity, were on that frontier. Incidentally, three of the churches which he instituted were, in the course of the years, to become among the most influential Baptist churches in Texas. The circumstances that made this possible were the results of the founding of a Baptist school in each case. The first of these churches was at Belton. Byars organized

the church there in 1849.³ With the removal of Baylor

3 Texas Baptist, February 24, 1859.

Female College from Independence to Belton, this church assumed a great importance. The second of the churches was that at Waco. From a small beginning in a board shanty in 1851, The First Baptist Church of Waco, through its close connection with Baylor University, has been one of the most influential bodies in the state. The First Baptist Church of Brownwood was the third of the trio. This church grew very slowly from 1876 to 1890, but with the founding of Howard Payne College it began to grow both in influence and numbers.

If Byars' effort had been the only missionary work on the frontier, its significance would have been largely dissipated in the vastness of the territory. Fortunately, there were other missionaries at work, and, among them all, they transformed the region. The federal census enumerators found only one hundred and sixty-four churches⁴ of all faiths in Texas, in 1850. This number was in the

4 Abstract of the Seventh Census, 30.

ratio of one to twelve hundred ninety-six of the population.⁵ Only thirty Baptist churches made returns to

 5 Ibid.

 the census bureau.⁶ Unfortunately, the membership was not

6 Ibid.

given. Ten years later the same certifying agency credits
 the Baptists with two hundred and eighty churches. The
 value of their property was a little over a quarter of
 a million dollars.⁷ Again the membership is missing. The

7 Ninth Census of the United States, 1860, Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics, 473.

Civil War period was difficult for all institutions.
 Baptist churches suffered along with others of like
 nature. The census report of 1870 shows a decrease in
 the number of Baptist churches in the state. That year
 there were two hundred and seventy-five churches. Their
 membership totaled sixty-one thousand seven hundred.⁸

8 Tenth Census of the United States, 1870, Population, I, 555. In tabulating these data the writer examined a
 great number of minutes of Baptist associations for 1870.
 It is plain that the census enumerators failed to secure
 the information for the churches in at least seven
 counties west of the Brazos River. These seven counties
 boasted thirty churches.

Statistics for 1880 are unavailable. The census bureau published no data on the subject. In 1890, two years after the death of Byars, the Baptists boasted two thousand three hundred and eighteen churches, and a membership of almost one hundred and thirty thousand.⁹ As

⁹ Report, Eleventh Census, 1890, Statistics of Churches, 165.

in our surmises of the number and location of Byars' churches, we must also deal in a half-truth in attempting to determine Baptist growth on the frontier. Two hundred and ninety-four churches were located in the territory in which he had labored.¹⁰

¹⁰ Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p.36-82. Counting only those churches whose reports to associations showed the date of their organization, we are able to account for nearly three hundred. No church organized prior to 1841, the year of his ordination, nor after 1888, the year of his death, was considered. This number is too low. There were churches organized during this period whose date was never reported.

To what extent the churches influenced the individual members, we have no means of knowing. Certainly, the meetings of the church furnished a means of social contact which the members would not have had under other circumstances. Baptist churches, however, were not interested in providing social contacts, and, no doubt, any Baptist minister of the period would have resented any

such implication. Baptist ministers were interested in spreading the gospel of salvation, and in securing the best possible moral response from the individual members of the churches. Discipline was rigorous. Most Baptist churches held monthly conferences, and, in many instances, the fellowship of the church would be ascertained. If it were found that any of the members were at odds with each other, the church investigated the matter. Since the membership of the church was small, reprehensible conduct would hardly escape the scrutiny of the brother-¹¹hood. Even toward the close of Byars' ministry, discipline

¹¹ Sketch of Elder Daniel Parker and the Pilgrim Baptist Church, MS., in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Seminary Hill.

was still harsh. One Baptist church of which Byars was pastor excluded members from its fellowship on charges of "drunkenness," "conduct unbecoming a Christian," and "profanity and unbecoming conduct toward his wife."¹²

¹² Minutes, First Baptist Church, Brownwood, II, 13, 15, 17.

Baptist Schools

Baptists have been wrongfully accused of narrowness, bigotry, and ignorance. The first two accusations had their origin in doctrinal practices. The charge of ignorance

grew out of the inability of the Baptists to better their conditions. In every European country where Baptist doctrines were practiced, legal restrictions forbade their having schools.¹³ In those countries where they

13 J.M.Cramp, Baptist History, 263.

have had religious freedom, they have promoted education in a manner comparing favorably with the other denominations. Many of the leaders among the Baptists in Texas were educated and well-trained. Many others were uneducated and wholly without training. Soon after the beginning of their organized work, the leaders realized that an educated ministry must be secured if the denomination expected to keep pace with its opportunities. Again, the Baptists held that a liberal education "is connected with every interest of society."¹⁴ But the question

14 Minutes, Union Association, 1869, p. 9.

of a worthy ministry more than overbalanced that of secular education for the masses, so "it came about among early Texas Baptists that the first agitation of the question of education was mainly with reference to ministerial education."¹⁵ In order to provide the facilities

15 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 366.

whereby young preachers should have the proper educational advantages, the delegates of Union Association, in 1841, made provision for the Texas Educational Society. Completion of the organization took place in 1843. This was the body that led in the founding of Baylor University.¹⁶

¹⁶ Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I, 149.

Other schools in the eastern and central portions of the state followed Baylor University. All of these institutions enrolled young ministers and appealed to the denomination to seek out the men and urge their attendance. This attitude of urging the preachers reacted on the churches and the associations. The decade of the sixties witnessed a most active campaign for ministerial education. Numerous resolutions and reports were read in the various associations.¹⁷ The delegates to the Baptist State Conven-

¹⁷ Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 366-377.

tion in 1866 raised one hundred and thirty dollars to aid a young minister in Baylor University. The same year Little River Association collected over one hundred dollars to aid a young minister.¹⁸ while in 1873 Waco Association

¹⁸ Ibid.

took pledges "to aid a young minister at Waco University, amounting to \$240, 200 pounds of pork and 50 bushels of corn."¹⁹

¹⁹ Walker and Lumpkin, History of Waco Baptist Association of Texas, 63.

Notwithstanding the Texans had accused the Mexican authorities of a lack of interest in popular education, the leaders in the government of the Republic of Texas failed, in a measure, to provide the facilities for a system of public schools. Even after statehood, the legislature did little more than allow the private schools subventions from the public treasury for conducting classes for the children of all citizens. This condition existed prior to the Civil War and resulted in a growing demand, on the part of the denominational schools, for a continuance of the policy of subvention after the war. Among the leading advocates of this policy were Dr. Rufus C. Burleson, president of Waco University, a Baptist institution, and Dr. Daniel Baker, the leader of the Presbyterians in Texas.²⁰

²⁰ Frederick Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 79-156.

Following the passage of the radical school law of 1871, the prospect of further subventions to private

schools faded. This law provided for a system of public schools unlike anything heretofore practiced in the United States. Baptists were up in arms and voiced their disapproval. At the meeting of of the Waco Association in 1871, that body adopted a report which stated that "the late school law, if our judgment of its workings be just, effectually closes out the idea of Baptist interests in all schools below the grade of College." ²¹ Previous

²¹ Walker and Lumpkin, History of the Waco Baptist Association of Texas, 59.

to the passage of the school law of 1871, the Baptists of Texas had established four institutions of college grade, and at least seventeen schools of elementary and academy grade. Waco University and four of the academies ²² were on the frontier in which Byars labored. The found-

²² Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p.13-17; Wilson, A History of Baptist Educational Efforts in Texas, 1829-1900, 141; 314.

ing of so many schools, and the choice of the sites are open to question. The schools, however, served a good purpose for their time and provided educational advantages for the youth of the state who otherwise would have been without instruction except for them.

The Temperance Crusade

The historical writer deals with facts. Arranging

these in order of sequence or in order of importance, he is able to interpret the life of a period in terms of its historical facts. The temperance movement in Texas was only a phase of a like movement throughout the United States. The crusade against liquor began in earnest in the decade of the forties. It gained momentum from year to year, and at the death of the subject of this narrative, it had begun to show evidences of success, in the form of strict regulation of the liquor traffic, not only in Texas, but also in other states as well. There were many contributing factors to the movement. To attempt to prove that the churches were the dominant factor in the crusade would be an impossible task. Such an assumption would be historically incorrect. Equally incorrect would be an assumption that the churches were not the motivating force which gave the movement its crusading characteristics. Practically every evangelical denomination engaged actively on the side of temperance. The more fervid one, notably the Methodists and Baptists, transmitted, through their ministers and women members, their own fervor to the movement. This resulted in its assuming a political, a social, and an ethical significance.

In September, 1842, a group of sixteen men in New York formed an organization known as the Sons of Temperance. This body was a secret society with an impressive ritual, bright-colored regalia, and a penchant for public display. The order sought to cultivate the good will of

the different evangelical denominations. This brought upon it the wrath of the liquor interests, and it received severe criticism for its church affiliations, its secrecy, and its public display.²³ The growth of the order was

23 Alexander Martin, Prize Essay on the Principles and Operations of the Order of the Sons of Temperance, 1-14.

phenomenal. In the first nine years of its existence its membership grew to nearly seventeen thousand.²⁴ State

24 Ibid.

organizations operated in most of the states, and large groups attended the public meetings of the order. Such a meeting was held at Washington in 1849, and "people were present from all over the country within a radius of one hundred miles of the town, and living witnesses estimate the crowd at ten thousand people. Governors, Senators, Congressmen, Judges, Lawyers, and distinguished Statesmen participated in the demonstration. It was on a scale far in advance of any meeting that had been undertaken in Texas up to that time and for brilliancy and display, easily exceeded any convocation ever held in the state."²⁵ A year later the organization had

25 Harry Haynes, Life and Writings of Dr. Rufus C. Burleson, 136-137. On the occasion of the meeting in Washington, Miss Georgia Jenkins, who was later to become

the wife of Dr. R.C. Burleson, the noted Baptist leader, presented a silk banner to the state organization of the Sons of Temperance. Burleson received the banner in the name of the order.

local groups in many of the smaller towns.

The resolutions of various Baptist groups in Texas and their communications to the newspapers clearly indicate the position of the denomination on the temperance question. Under date of February 11, 1854, the Tennessee Baptist published an article which read: "The temperance cause is doing good work in the Lone Star State. A mighty revolution has taken place in the last year. Petitions have been sent out to the legislature from almost every county in the state, praying that a law may be passed granting the privilege of each county to decide at the ballot box whether license to retail ardent spirits shall or shall not be granted. A memorial was presented by the Baptist General Association of Texas, and sev-

26

26 The Baptist General Association had its initial meeting in 1853, and changed its name to the Baptist Convention of Eastern Texas in 1854. The name was changed to the Baptist General Association again in 1868.

eral district associations praying the legislature to take immediate action upon the subject and pass some law to stop the ravages of intemperance in our state."

The legislature passed a number of acts during the two decades from 1856 to 1876 which offered some relief. They were, however, regulatory rather than prohibitory

and the temperance movement gained force. If we may judge from the prominence given the subject, a relatively large group of church members were among the drinkers. At the second meeting of the Waco Association in 1861, the committee on temperance reported that "it is a noticeable and lamentable fact that many of the exclusions from our churches may be traced directly or indirectly to the use of ardent spirits."²⁷ Certain leaders in the association

²⁷ Walker and Lumpkin, History of the Waco Baptist Association of Texas, 31.

held strong views on the subject. The report on temperance in 1870 advised the churches "if their members visit drinking saloons, indulge in the use of ardent spirits with drinking assemblies, or make a practice of drinking, that they withdraw from all such members as daring violators of ²⁸ Divine Law."

²⁸ Ibid., 54.

Conditions did not improve, and drinking among church members continued. A report to the Baptist General Missionary Association in 1872 set out that "it is no uncommon thing to hear of disturbances in our churches caused by the manufacture, sale, or use of intoxicating liquors."²⁹

²⁹ Proceedings, Fifth Annual Session, General Missionary Association, 1872, p. 24.

The Salado Association, in 1874, took note of the evils of intemperance and urged the churches to fight against it.³⁰ If the leaders were unsuccessful in curbing in-

30 Minutes, Salado Association, 1874, p. 7.

temperance among a minority of the members of the churches, they took steps to impress upon the younger members the evils of liquor. The denominational schools took great pains to enlist the students on the side of temperance. Baylor University reported in 1871 that "nearly every student joined the United Friends of Temperance."³¹

31 Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 386.

Interest in the Sons of Temperance organization waned about this time, and the United Friends of Temperance served the same purpose as the older organization. The new order sought to engender an interest among the youth of the state through its juvenile branch called the Band of Hope.³²

32 G.A. Brooks, A Political Survey of the Prohibition Movement in Texas, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1920, p.14.

After the adoption of the constitution in 1876, local option became a means of controlling the sale of

33

liquor, and the church people intensified their efforts.

33 The Constitution of Texas, Article XVI, Section 20.

The crusade changed from one of temperance to one of prohibition. Seeking to gain every adherent possible, the leaders employed various means of acquainting the public with the evils of the liquor traffic. Mass-meetings were always the favorite method. Gifted speakers brought their best arguments before the large audiences. Boys and girls sang temperance songs. The religious press devoted column after column to the cause of sobriety. Pamphlets and tracts had a wide circulation. Many of these were lurid in their content and sought to arouse an emotionalism that would lead to political action. Late in 1886, Dr. G.C. Rankin, editor of the Texas Christian Advocate, published a pamphlet entitled "Two Nights in the Bar-rooms, And What I Saw There." A Methodist bishop characterized it as "Timely Blows From a Stalwart Arm." Continuing the bishop wrote: "He saw nothing new, it is true, and nothing strange, for the iniquitous business wears in every place at all times the same hideous aspects of woe and ruin. But he saw sights whose repulsive loathsomeness can never be too often disclosed to the eyes of men, and whose appalling lessons cannot be too persistently enforced upon the attention of outraged

public sentiment. ³⁴ Toward the end of the period cover-

34 The Texas Christian Advocate, January 20, 1887.

ed in this study, the lines between the two opposing groups were closely drawn. Many ministers made public appearances in favor of prohibition. Their opponents criticized them for deserting their pulpits and entering the political battle. Many of the ministers, especially the more prominent ones, earned the sobriquet of political preachers at the hands of the proponents of the liquor interests. ³⁵

35 Brooks, A Political Survey of the Prohibition Movement in Texas, Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1920, p. 39-44.

Personal Influence

The hardships of pioneer life called out the best in the men of character, and they gave opportunity for the intensification of the bad in men of easy ethics and lacking in character. The frontier preacher touched both classes. To the upright he was a friend in every circumstance of life, and the circumstances of life were varied. Home life had its tragic moments. Death was a frequent occurrence. A father was the victim of an Indian attack. A son drowned in a swollen stream. A little girl pulled a rail from a fence and crushed her frail body.

A mother sickened and left a group of children. In these experiences it was the frontier preacher who brought a measure of comfort if comfort may be had in such experiences. He offered advice, buried the dead, and ministered in a spiritual sense during the days of mourning. Just as there were tragedies into which the minister came as an actor, so, also, there were times of gaiety when he was in evidence. A frontier marriage was a community event. The bride's family made preparations that took all the neighbors into account. On the day appointed the settlers, for miles around, gathered for the ceremony. The preacher came, and, in the presence of the group, performed the ceremony, after which there was the usual feast of edibles, followed by an evening of gaiety which, though conspicuous for the absence of the best taste in dress and speech, was not lacking in spontaneity.

36 Dick, The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890, p. 337-339; Carl C. Rister, The Southern Plainsmen, 116.

The pioneer preacher was an evangelist. Unconverted men formed one of his particular interests. Especially did he seek the conversion of the leaders. Two factors influenced him in his efforts in this direction. He believed from a doctrinal point of view that all men were lost. On the other hand, those who were converted, were subjects for possible church membership, and the ministers of all denominations had an active interest in additions

to the church rolls. In 1889 a disreputable thief in Brown county became a minister after coming under the influence of a Baptist missionary. Farther west, in Taylor county, the Rev. James A. Hyder, a Methodist minister, held a revival meeting in which a saloon-keeper was converted. At the close of the service the liquor dealer invited the congregation to go with him to his saloon and to watch him destroy his whiskey.³⁷

³⁷ "Early Day Religion," in The Pecan Valley News, April 26, 1894; G.C. Boswell, "James Abercrombie Hyder, Dean of West Texas Preachers," in West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XI, 44.

Frontier missionaries performed other services among the unconverted than that of preaching. Rival bands of thieves made life intolerable in many frontier settlements. Groups of rowdy cowboys, seeking an outlet for suppressed emotions in liquor, terrorized the towns at intervals. Feuds between factions endangered life. Such a feud existed in Erath county just after the Civil War. Feeling between the feudists grew so bitter that practically every man in the southwestern section of the county was involved. Each side threatened the other. Finally, two well-armed camps faced each other on Alarm Creek near Dublin. Just before the firing was expected to begin, the Rev. Reuben D. Ross, a Baptist minister known all over the Northwestern frontier as

"Comanche Rube;" appeared between the lines of armed men, carrying a white flag. He summoned the leaders to a parley. "Under the pleas of Bro. Ross the leaders met in a conference and agreed to a peaceable settlement. 38

38 The Texas Evangel, July 28, 1938.

CHAPTER VIII

Last Years

The biological factor of age began to manifest itself in the life of Byars during the last year of his work for the Salado Association, in Hamilton county. The sickness and death of his wife interfered with his activity during the summer of 1876. His reports began to show a decline in the number of miles traveled, in the number of families visited, and in the number of sermons preached. He was loath to confess that age had laid a heavy hand upon him. In fact, he did not confess it. But it is easy to read between the lines and to discern that he realized it. In reporting the theft of his horse he said, "I am now riding an old slug that would wear out a much younger man."¹

¹ Texas Baptist, April 6, 1876.

After accepting appointment under the direction of the Baptist General Association, Byars left Hamilton county and moved to Brownwood.² Using his new home as a base of operations, he

² The exact date of his removal to Brownwood is uncertain. His first wife died in Hamilton county on September 1, 1876. In the summer of 1877 he married Mrs. M. C. Moore, a widow who lived in Comanche county. A search of the marriage records of the various counties failed to fix the date of his second marriage. Sometime previous to September 10, 1877, he bought a small tract of land in Brownwood, and was residing there on that date. The destruction of the Brown county records by fire, in March 1880, makes it impossible to determine when he purchased the home. However, his will, dated September 10, 1877, and describing the property, is proof of his ownership of the property on that date, and also of his second marriage prior to that time, since the will names Mrs. M. C. Byars as residuary legatee.

continued his activities in Brown, Comanche, Hamilton, and San Saba counties. The first quarter of 1879 found him idle because of illness. In the spring he received appointment from the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as evangelist for Brown county.³ His designation, no

3 Proceedings, Southern Baptist Convention, 1880, p. 20.

doubt, came as a result of conditions in the county. The Baptists of Brown county organized the Pecan Valley Baptist Association on September 6, 1876. At that time there was not a Baptist Sunday School in the association, and only two union Sunday Schools operated in the county.⁴ In 1878 there

4 Minutes, Pecan Valley Association, 1876, p. 5.

was great religious destitution.⁵ The next year the Com-

5 Ibid., 1878, p. 3.

mittee on the State of Religion reported that: "We find most of the churches in a cold condition. They report very few additions by baptism. We find also that some of our best and most influential ministers, in order to support their families, have been forced to resign the pastoral care of some of their churches."⁶

6 Ibid., 1879, p. 7-8.

Here, then, was a field exactly suited to the old man's training, and he entered it with zest. But zeal alone would not carry him over the long rides on horseback. He needed physical endurance, and this he no longer possessed. He gave up the work after serving a little over a year. Early in 1881 the Baptist church in Brownwood invited him to become pastor. He accepted and served for a year. His last active service

⁷ Ibid., 1882, p. 13.

came in 1884, during which year he served as pastor of the Clear Creek church in Brown county.

⁸ Ibid., 1884, p. 12.

Interspersed at intervals, during the last years of his life, are occurrences which indicate Byars' interest in his brethren. In mid-October, 1879, he visited the meeting of the Trinity River Association and preached the introductory sermon. Early in

⁹ Texas Baptist, October 28, 1879.

November he visited in Stephenville and preached two "splendid sermons." On April 21, 1881, the citizens of Palestine made

¹⁰ Ibid., November 13, 1879.

much of a meeting of Texas veterans. Byars and Z.N. Morrell were

11

among those who attended.

11 Texas Baptist Herald, April 28, 1881.

The Baptists of Texas had but two general missionary conventions in the state from 1848 to 1877. During the next eighteen years, four new conventions appeared. These new bodies were more or less local in character. They did not attempt to cover the state at large but confined their domestic missionary activities to certain well-established territories. ¹² One of these, the

12 Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p. 7-12.

Central Texas Convention, had the northwestern frontier for its field of endeavor and, as a result, the efforts in favor of its establishment came to be called the Northwestern Movement. Byars was perhaps the strongest advocate of the movement. His activity in this direction brought upon him much criticism from certain leaders in the Baptist State Convention and in the Baptist General Association. ¹³ The Northwestern Movement had its inception in what

13 Texas Baptist Herald, December 9, 1880.

some Baptist leaders on the frontier felt was neglect of the section by the two older bodies. Neither of the two conventions, at any time, had had more than two missionaries in the region between the upper Brazos and the upper Colorado. Religious destitution was

everywhere apparent, and the Baptists were hardly touching the territory.

Apparently, the first public mention of a proposed convention came in April, 1873. At a ministers' and deacons' meeting with Ash Creek Church, in Tarrant county, in August, 1873, the project was broached, and Byars spoke to the group. At that time he was not in favor of a convention. He proposed, rather, a district association west of Shiloh and West Fork Associations. ¹⁴

14 Texas Baptist Herald, August 21, 1873 •

His fellow Baptists failed to follow his lead, and the convention idea persisted. Five years passed, and sentiment in favor of the proposed convention crystalized. In 1878 Byars was heartily in favor of the new body. The summer of that year found him visiting the associations in the region and speaking in favor of the movement. ¹⁵

15 Texas Baptist Herald, August 15, 1878; Minutes, San Saba Association, 1878, p. 11.

Again there was delay. Finally, "in response to a call by a number of Baptist churches and brethren through a circular addressed to the churches and denomination west of the main Brazos River, south of the Clear Fork [Brazos], north of Belton, and east of the plains, to meet in convention at Dublin, Texas, on November 12, 1880, for the purpose of organizing a general body," the Northwestern ¹⁶ Movement achieved its objective.

16 Carroll, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895, p. 11;123. Delegates from seventeen churches and one association met in Dublin on November 12, 1880, and organized the Central Texas Convention. The convention held five annual meetings, employed from one to four missionaries each year, and collected \$1,192.56 for missionary endeavor.

The state of Byars' health, from 1880 to his death, caused him much concern. Likewise the state of his finances was a constant worry. In July, 1881, the Rev. C. C. Parrock, one of the leaders in the Central Texas Convention, appealed to the delegates for financial assistance for him. The response was not large, amounting to only a little over fifteen dollars, but Byars received it gratefully. He wrote a letter of thanks to the Texas Baptist Herald expressing his deep appreciation for the thoughtfulness of his fellow Baptists.¹⁷ The Rev. C. C. Parrock made an appeal

17 Texas Baptist Herald, August 4, 1881.

to the convention, at the time the offering was taken for Byars, to send payments regularly, but the Baptists of Texas were not yet committed to a program of relief for their aged ministers.¹⁸

18 Ibid.

A severe attack of rheumatism in February, 1881, kept him in bed for almost two months.¹⁹ A recurring attack of the same malady

19 Texas Baptist Herald, March 10, 1881.

incapacitated him in the autumn of 1884. A letter written on December 11, 1884, indicates his extreme loneliness and also his keen and active interest in the work of the churches to which he had given so much time and labor. Writing to his seven year old grandson he said:

Dear Charlie: You don't know how it grieved me to think that you wood not speak to me on your arrival in Brownwood-, although you found me verry sick in bed where I had lain for weeks without a child or Grand Child to give me a drink of water or make me a fire. If I hadn't had One of the best women and friends that could be supposed I must have suffered.

P. S. Charlie write often and tell me something when you do write. . . who is your preacher, how is your church doing (?) ²⁰ We will soon have our fine Church house finished.

20 N. T. and M. C. Byars to Charles Byars, December 11, 1884.
In possession of Charles Byars, Eastland, Texas.

The return of strength, for which he hoped, failed to appear. The encroachments of age were too much for him to withstand. By midsummer, 1887, he was too feeble to leave his home. He lingered for a year. The heat of the summer was too much for him. In his lucid moments he spoke to his friends of the approaching end. Dr. J. D. Robnett, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Brownwood, visited him daily. On the morning of Wednesday, July 18, 1888, Robnett was with him, and Byars quoted the twenty-third psalm. It was his last effort in a long life in the ministry. He died at midday.

CHAPTER IX

Among the Brethren

The aim of biographical writing is to present a character in his true light. No greater problem confronts the writer in this field than that of reconstructing his subject as he was. A man reveals his true character in what he does and in the influence he exerts upon his contemporaries. The tendency to hero-worship of those we admire is strong in all of us. Equally strong is the tendency to harsh criticism for those whose faults we discern. The work of Byars has been summarized in the preceding chapters. Incidentally, the reader will have formed some notion of the man. A few fragments are included here to further clarify the picture.

Baptist missionary work on the frontier would have gone forward without Byars, but one doubts whether it would have gone as far as it did with him. Only one other Baptist preacher even approximated his activity, and that was Z.N.Morrell, and Morrell neither labored as many years, nor had as much to show for his efforts, as did Byars. He lived for his work. Miles of travel were no obstacle to him. They were only incidents in his busy life. Covering miles on horseback meant finding people, and people were the objects of his labor. To search out believers and bring them the gospel, to convert the unregenerate, to baptize them, and then to organize the believers into churches was the passion of his life. A perusal of his reports to associations and to the two general Baptist bodies for which he labored reveals that,

in thirty-three years, he traveled over one hundred thousand miles. This distance would equal one hundred and five trips from the northwest corner of Texas to the mouth of the Rio Grande, and it would also equal four complete circuits of the earth.

Byars left no complete record of the number of his converts. He was not, primarily, an evangelist, although he was active in that phase of missionary effort. His reports, however, do not compare favorably, in this respect, with those of other missionaries. He specialized in founding churches, and in this field he excelled all other missionaries.¹ Equally active was he in founding

¹ Texas Baptist Herald, September 4, 1884.

associations. Only Morrell surpassed him in this activity.

Physically Byars was not an imposing figure. He was slight, but erect in stature, with penetrating blue eyes, and an unusually large nose and sharp features. His voice was strong, and he spoke in a crisp, sharp manner. He was never still. He was never idle. These facts account for the astonishing sum total of his accomplishments.

Imbibing the principles of the Baptists in his formative years in the hill country of South Carolina, he clung to them. Doctrinally he was a sound Baptist. Marked, indeed, were his reactions in this respect. He had little patience with those who compromised with error. So strong were his convictions on doctrines that he spoke his mind openly. On one occasion he labored for a

time with a minister who had previously been a follower of Alexander Campbell, but who had become a Baptist. Byars detected his lack of strict adherence to Baptist principles and denounced him through the religious press.² His work carried him

2 Tennessee Baptist, November 2, 1854.

among people of diverse religious views; and he realized that, if the difficulties of denominational rivalries were to be surmounted and Baptist work made permanent, only trained ministers, of undoubted loyalty, should labor on the frontier. This explains his frequent allusions in the Baptist press to the need for strong preachers.³ So firmly established was his reputation for

3 Texas Baptist, February 17, 1877.

denominational doctrines that, when he left Texas for Mississippi, in 1868, the general missionary agent of the Baptist Convention commended him to the Baptists of Mississippi as "sound in doctrine, ordinances, and church polity."⁴

4 Texas Baptist Herald, November 18, 1868.

Byars was a man of the people and never lost the common touch with his fellows. Sensing the faith of his neighbors in his integrity, he gave himself unstintedly in their behalf. On January 29, 1844, President Sam Houston entered into a contract with Charles Fenton Mercer of Tallahassee, Florida, by which Mercer was

granted authority to colonize a large body of land in Navarro and adjoining counties. Mercer sent William Anderson to Texas to survey the lands. Anderson and his associates apparently failed to respect the land lines that had long been established. The citizenry called a protest meeting and elected Byars chairman. He took the lead in their quarrel with the colonization company and was instrumental in securing court action which resulted in the protection of the settlers in their rights. Loyalty

5 Northern Standard, July 10, 1847.

to his neighbors drew them close to him and intimate friendships developed. Sometime during the decade of the fifties, the date is uncertain, he came into possession of some bounty land scrip. He used the scrip in laying claim to a section of rich land in southeastern Parker county. In 1872 he sold the land to a man on condition that the buyer would later transfer one-half of the tract to each of two young women, whose fathers were Baptist ministers, and intimate friends of Byars.

6 Deed Records, Parker county, IV, 271.

Human nature manifests itself in the social relationships of life. The strength or weakness of character, self-control, self-abnegation, vanity, tolerance, and patience, all of these and many other social characteristics are an index to a man's real nature. With Byars this statement was eminently true. His strength of character no man ever questioned. He lived by a rigid code. Of

self-abnegation there was abundant evidence. Missionary effort was the passion of his life. He literally gave himself to his work, and without any other thought, except that his work must prosper. No act of his life even indicates that he was vain or conceited. He was content to accept an humble place and to allow other men, less gifted than himself, to occupy the places of honor. But in point of self-control, tolerance, and patience there was much that we could wish had been otherwise.

On September 4, 1884, he published a short sketch of his life in the Texas Baptist Herald. Writing of his activity among the friendly Indians in 1842, he said, "I only served six months owing to the conduct of the Indians and the agents." This statement is indicative of the man. There is no hint of the nature of their conduct. Everything is left to surmisal or conjecture. The only thing we know is that Byars left the agency, and he left because he was displeased with conditions. His impatience asserted itself. He simply refused to go on under the circumstances. There are instances when his irascible, self-assertive nature manifested itself toward his best friends. In 1866 he was pastor of the Mink's Prairie Baptist Church in Montgomery county. He and one of the deacons of the church were joint-owners of a flock of sheep. A disagreement arose between them. In the meantime, Byars and Dr. F. M. Law, president of Baylor College, were holding a revival meeting in the church. Byars made known to Law his intention of denouncing the deacon publicly, at a baptismal service on a certain day. Law remonstrated with him and persuaded him to change his mind, and the difficulty passed without further public incident. 7

7 Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 249.

On another occasion, in 1868, while he was pastor of the church at Cedar Bayou, in Chambers county, a difficulty arose between him and the church. In a headstrong fashion he stood alone and attempted to force the church to accept his point of view. This the members steadfastly refused to do. The ill-feeling against him grew so strong that the sons of one of the members threatened the preacher's life. Byars sought the advice of the Rev. J. M. Perry, who lived in an adjoining neighborhood. Perry advised him to call upon some of the Baptist leaders to sit in counsel with the church. This he decided to do, and, on November 1, 1868, J. W. D. Creath, B. F. Ellis, and J. W. Hart attended a called conference of the church and succeeded in accomplishing⁸ "a full and satisfactory settlement" of the difficulty.

8 Texas Baptist Herald, November 18, 1868. Jesse Perry to Havins, August 14, 1939, Jesse Perry, a son of J. M. Perry, was a youth of sixteen years of age, and remembers the incident of Byars' seeking the counsel of his father.

The dilatory practices of the various missionary boards, for whom Byars worked, irked him, and he never failed to voice his disapproval. Baptist associations met only once a year. The official board of an association, having for its membership one representative from each church, usually met quarterly. More often

than not, the offerings for associational missions came at the meeting of the association rather than at the quarterly meetings. In the face of these conditions, the missionary had to wait until the meeting of the association for his salary. Byars knew this, but he refused to accept it. In 1856 he complained that "my salary, at best, away on this frontier, will not half support me, and I am positively distressed."⁹ Again in 1876, the treasurer

⁹ Texas Baptist, May 17, 1856.

of the Salado Association having failed to communicate with him, he sent his report to R.C. Buckner, editor of the Texas Baptist, and closed it with words that were cogent and biting. "I make my report to you, because I have not had a line, much less a commission, from the Cor. Sec."¹⁰

¹⁰ Texas Baptist, November 16, 1876.

Probably, no other enterprise of his life so absorbed Byars as did that of the proposed Indian mission on the upper Brazos in 1855 and the two years following. He used every available means in his power in seeking to secure the unqualified support of his plan. When his fellow-Baptists neglected to enter the field, in a speech before the Baptist State Convention, he used the most vitriolic¹¹ language in upbraiding them for their neglect and hardness of heart.

¹¹ Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1859.

With all his irascibility Byars was also eccentric. Children, in the homes in which he spent his visits, disliked him for his many wants, which, he insisted, they must satisfy. On September 10, 1877, he made his will. Its provisions divided his property equally between his wife, Mrs. M. C. Byars, and his three sons, and left entirely out a daughter of a deceased son. He sought to restrict his wife's future actions. In the event of the marriage of his wife, following his death, her portion of the property should revert to the three sons. He directed that unequal portion be awarded to each son. The first was to receive twice as much as the second, and the third was to receive twice as much as the first.¹²

¹²"Last Will and Testament of N. T. Byars", in Probate Records, Brown County, Brownwood.

The strong qualities of the man far overbalanced his weaker nature. His activity furnished many contacts with the other leaders of the denomination. These contacts, and a knowledge of the success of his work, drew the leaders to him. They recognized his capacity for wise counsel and sought it. The Rev. T. W. Cox came from Alabama to Texas in 1838, and organized the three original churches which formed the Union Association in 1840. In the autumn of 1841 Judge R. E. B. Baylor and other Baptist leaders accused Cox of preaching heretical doctrines. The matter became serious, and Z. N. Morrell assumed the responsibility of pressing the charges. Before determining what course he would pursue, Morrell called together a small group of ministers and two laymen, Byars and A. Buffington, for advice. Both Byars and Buffington were later to

enter the ministry. Both were constituent members of the first Baptist church in Texas, when Morrell perfected the organization at Washington, in 1837. Whether or not this influenced him in selecting the group is unknown. It is an established fact, however, that the entire group felt that the charges should be pressed.¹³

¹³ Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 144-148; Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, 134-135. Morrell went into the church of which Cox was pastor and pressed the charges and succeeded in having him excluded from its membership.

Byars was a perennial attendant upon the meetings of the Baptist State Convention. He was absent in Mississippi in 1869 and again in 1870. These two instances represent the only occasions of his absence at the annual meetings from 1848 to 1886. He was a member of the board of directors of the convention in 1861, 1862, and 1863. Hardly a year passed that he had no part on the program of the body. He was an authority on home mission work, and his brethren respected him. In 1884 by special vote of the delegates the program was altered in order that the convention might hear him relate his missionary experiences.¹⁴

¹⁴ Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1884, p. 19.

The small salary which Byars received for his work was insufficient for any accumulation for his old age. The same was true of other Baptist preachers. A few leaders began an agitation for a denominational agency for the care of aged ministers as early as 1877. The conviction grew with the years, and, in 1884, the

the board of directors of the convention appointed Byars on its staff in grateful remembrance of the work he had done in the past.¹⁵

¹⁵ ibid., 1885, 20-21; L.R.Elliott [ed], Centennial Story of Texas Baptists, 174.

The best appraisal of his work among the Baptists of Texas is that found in a few excerpts, selected at random, from some of the leaders of the denomination. Z.N.Morrell knew him best. Morrell characterized him as a "true and laborious pioneer preacher."¹⁶

¹⁶ Morrell, Flowers and Fruits, 277.

The Rev. John H. Freeman wrote: "In the spring of 1846, I first met Elder N.T.Byars. He was a man of great energy, and perhaps did more to establish the cause of Christ on the frontiers of Texas, and assisted in establishing more Baptist churches than anyone[else] that ever labored on this field. I labored with him in several meetings and learned to love him."¹⁷ W.T.Compere, the representative

¹⁷ John H. Freeman, "Recollections of Early Days in Texas," in Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, II, 95-96.

of the Baptist General Association in 1877, spoke of him as "the proper man in the proper place."¹⁸ Dr.R.C.Buckner wrote of him

¹⁸ Texas Baptist, June 21, 1877.

in 1877: "N.T. Byars stands foremost among the missionaries. He is peculiarly fitted for the frontier." ¹⁹ The Rev. J.B. Link was the

19 Ibid., October 11, 1877.

founder and editor of the Texas Baptist Herald. In this capacity he knew much about the leaders and had occasion to appraise their work. Notwithstanding Byars' attitude toward the establishment of a new convention, to which the editor was unalterably opposed, Link led in an effort to secure financial assistance for Byars. Deprecating the fact that the churches failed to respond to the call for aid, Link wrote: "I hope it is not because the old man has not been so good a partisan in denominational policy as he seemed to be when the promise of assistance was made; for this dear old brother has thought to do many things contrary both to us and to this paper in the past few years, and no ~~one~~ still thinks so, but what of it? He is now old, battle-scarred, way-worn, and feeble, but still pursuing." ²⁰

20 Texas Baptist Herald, December 9, 1880.

There had been those who criticized in the later years of his life, but his death hushed these. When the Baptist General Convention met late in 1888, a committee, consisting of J.H. Stribling, J.B. Link, W.L. Henly, and S.J. Anderson, was appointed to submit suitable resolutions on the death of Byars. Link, the newspaper man, was adept with words, but even more so was Stribling. One of the two wrote the resolutions. Among other things they cited the

fact of Byars' association with early historical events in Texas and his long service in the ranks of the denomination. Continuing, the final sentence ran: "But it was as a preacher for more than fifty years that he has built a monument, in planting churches, in leading souls to Christ, and in extending our Redeemer's Kingdom over this country, that will live when the world has burned up, and the stars fade from the sky."²¹

24. 21 Proceedings, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1888, p.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

Adjutant General's Papers, Correspondence of Major John B. Jones, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Byars, Noah T., Private Correspondence, in possession of Noah A. Byars, Eastland, Texas.

Byars Papers, Howard Payne College Library, Brownwood.

Comptroller's Civil Service Papers, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Memorials and Petitions, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Sketch of Elder Daniel Parker and the Pilgrim Baptist Church, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Seminary Hill.

Zuber, W.P., Eighty Years in Texas, Archives, State Library, Austin.

Newspapers

Northern Standard, 1847, Clarksville.

Telegraph and Texas Register, 1837, Columbia.

Tennessee Baptist, 1854, Memphis.

The Baptist Standard, 1937, Dallas.

The Pecan Valley News, 1894, Brownwood.

Texas Baptist, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1859, 1860, 1861, Anderson.

Texas Baptist, 1876, 1877, Dallas.

Texas Baptist Herald, 1868, 1869, 1873, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1884, Houston.

Texas Christian Advocate, 1887, Galveston.

Public Records

Abstract of the Seventh Census, 1850, Washington.

American Manufactures, Third Census of the United States, Philadelphia, 1813.

- American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, Washington,
(Gales and Seaton), 1834.
- American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, Washington,
(Gales and Seaton), 1861.
- Census Report, Eighth Census, Population, I, Washington
(Gales and Seaton), 1860.
- Census Report, Ninth Census, Population, I, Washington
(Government Printing Office), 1870.
- Census Report, Eleventh Census, Statistics of Churches,
Washington (Government Printing Office), 1890.
- Deed Records, Bastrop County, Book C, Bastrop.
- Deed Records, Brown County, Book G, Brownwood.
- Deed Records, Parker County, IV, Weatherford.
- Deed Records, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Book
F, Book G, Spartanburg.
- Deed Records, Washington County, Book A, Brenham.
- Election Record, Bastrop County, Book B, Bastrop.
- Gammel, H.P.N., Laws of Texas, I, III, VIII, Austin
(Gammel Book Company), Austin.
- Heads of Families, First Census of the United States,
1790, Philadelphia.
- Marriage License Record, Washington County, Book A,
Brenham.
- Probate Record, Brown County, Brownwood.
- Probate Record, Spartanburg County, South Carolina,
Spartanburg.
- Smither, Harriet, (ed.), Journal of the Fourth Congress
of Texas, Austin.
- The Constitution of Texas, Austin, 1924.

Printed Matter

- Minutes, Baptist State Convention, 1851, Washington;
1854, 1855, 1856 1857, 1858, 1859, Anderson;
1861, 1862, 1864, 1867, 1874, Houston; 1884,
1885, Austin.

Minutes, Brazos River Association, 1858, Anderson.

Minutes, First Baptist Church, Brownwood, I-II.

Minutes, Little River Association, 1861, Cameron.

Minutes, Live Oak Baptist Church, Brown County.

Minutes, Pecan Valley Association, 1876, 1882, Brownwood.

Minutes, Salado Association, 1874, Houston; 1875, 1876,
Belton.

Minutes, Trinity River Association, 1848, no place.

Minutes, Tryon Association, 1864, no place; 1865, 1866,
Houston.

Minutes, Union Association, 1862, Bellville; 1869,
Houston.

Minutes, West Fork Association, 1855, Birdville; 1856,
1857, Anderson; 1872, 1873, Weatherford;
1874, Dallas.

Proceedings, Baptist General Missionary Association, 1868,
Corsicana; 1872, Houston; 1879, Dallas.

Proceedings, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1888,
Waco.

Proceedings, Baptist State Convention, 1849, Huntsville.

Proceedings, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845, 1880,
Louisville; 1889, Atlanta.

Periodicals

Baptist Memorial and Monthly Chronicle, 1846, New York.

Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine, I-II,
Austin, 1891-1892.

Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, V, VII,
X, Austin (The Texas State Historical Association).

The Mississippi Valley Historical Quarterly, XIX, XXIII,
Lincoln.

The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXI, XXXVI,
Austin (The Texas State Historical Association).

The Texas Evangel, I, San Antonio.

Upper Canada Baptist Magazine, I, Toronto.

West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, VIII, X, XI,
Abilene (The West Texas Historical Association).

Western Baptist Review, II, Frankfort, 1846.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Manuscripts

Brooks, Glynn Austin, A Political Survey of the Prohibition Movement in Texas, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Texas, 1920.

Havins, T.R., The History of Brown County, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Texas, 1931.

Filizola, U.D., Correspondence of Santa Anna During the Texas Campaign, 1835-1836, Translated with Introduction and Notes, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Texas, 1939.

Wilson Carl B., A History of Baptist Education in Texas, 1829-1900, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Texas, 1934.

Maps

The United States Department of Interior, General Topographic Map of the State of Texas, 1937, Washington (Government Printing Office), 1937.

Books

Baker, D.W.C., A Texas Scrapbook, Austin (The Stack Company), 1935.

Barker, Eugene C., (ed.), The Austin Papers, Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1919, Washington (Government Printing Office), 1924.

Barker, Eugene C., The Life of Stephen F. Austin, Nashville (Cokesbury Press), 1925.

Brown, J. Newton, Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Philadelphia (Lippincott and Grambo), 1855.

- Carroll, James Milton, A History of Texas Baptists,
Dallas (Baptist Standard Publishing Company),
1923.
- Carroll, James Milton, Texas Baptist Statistics, 1895,
Houston, 1895.
- Cathcart, William, Baptist Encyclopedia, Philadelphia,
1881.
- Cross, F. M., Early Days in Central Texas, Brownwood
(Greenwood Printing Company), no date.
- Dick, Everett, The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890,
New York (Appleton-Century Company), 1937.
- Dixon, Sam Houston, The Men Who Made Texas Free, Houston
(Texas Historical Publishing Company), 1924.
- Dodge, Richard Irving, The Hunting Grounds of the Great
West, London (Chatto and Windus), 1877.
- Eby, Frederick, Christianity and Education, Dallas
(Baptist General Convention), 1915.
- Eby, Frederick, The Development of Education in Texas,
New York (The Macmillan Company), 1925.
- Elliott, L. R., (ed.), The Centennial Story of Texas
Baptists, Dallas (Baptist General Convention),
1936.
- Ewell, Thomas T., A History of Hood County, Grandbury
(Grandbury News), 1895.
- Fuller, B. F., History of Texas Baptists, Louisville
(Baptist Book Concern), 1900.
- Gravis, Peter, Twenty-Five Years on the Outside Row of
the Northwest Texas Conference, Comanche,
no date.
- Gray, William F., From Virginia to Texas, 1835, Houston
(Dillaye and Company), 1909.
- Greer, James K., (ed.), A Texas Ranger and Frontiersman,
The Days of Buck Barry in Texas, 1845-1906,
Dallas (The Southwest Press), 1932.
- Hardin, John Wesley, The Life of John Wesley Hardin
Written by Himself, Bandera (Frontier Times),
1925.

- Haynes, Harry, Life and Writings of Dr. Rufus C. Burleson, (Privately printed), 1901.
- Holland, G.A., The Double Log Cabins, Being a Brief Symposium of the Early History of Parker County, Weatherford, 1931.
- Kennedy, William, Texas, Fort Worth (The Molyneaux Craftsmen, Inc.), 1925.
- King, Edward, The Southern States of North America, London (Blakie and Son), 1875.
- Landrum, J.B.O., Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina, Greenville (Shannon and Company), 1897.
- Landrum, J.B.O., History of Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Atlanta (Franklin Printing and Publishing Company), 1900.
- Little, Lewis Peyton, Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in Virginia, Lynchburg (J.P. Bell Company), 1938.
- Marshall, Edward P., Treatise on Baptist Church Jurisprudence, Washington, 1898.
- Martin, Alexander, Prize Essay on the Principles and Operations of the Order of the Sons of Temperance, Richmond, 1851.
- McGlothlin, W.J., Baptist Confessions of Faith, Philadelphia (American Baptist Publication Society), 1911.
- Morrell, Z.N., Flowers and Fruits in the Wilderness or Forty-Six Years in Texas and Two Winters in Honduras, Fourth Edition, Dallas (Scharff and Company), 1886.
- Newman, Albert Henry, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, Philadelphia (American Baptist Publication Society), 1898.
- Newman, Albert Henry, A Manual of Church History, Two volumes, Philadelphia (American Baptist Publication Society), 1903.

- Ramsdell, Charles W., Reconstruction in Texas, New York (Columbia University Press), 1910.
- Rankin, Melinda, Texas, 1850, Boston, 1850.
- Riley, B.F., A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, Philadelphia (American Baptist Publication Society), 1898.
- Rister, Carl C., The Southern Plainsman, Norman (University of Oklahoma Press), 1938.
- Ross, James, Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross, Philadelphia (Grant Paries and Rogers), 1882.
- Shaper, William, Sectionalism in South Carolina, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1900, I, Washington, 1901.
- Simmons, Frank E., History of Coryell County, Gatesville (Coryell County News), 1936.
- Straus Oscar S., Roger Williams-The Pioneer of Religious Liberty, New York (The Century Company), 1914.
- Summers, L.P. Annals of Southwest Virginia, Abingdon (L. P. Summers), 1929.
- Wallis, Mrs. Johnnie Lockhart; Sixty Years on the Brazos, Los Angeles, 1930.
- Walker, J.L., and Lumpkin, C.P., History of the Waco Baptist Association of Texas, Waco, 1897.
- Weekley, Ernest, Surnames, London (J. Murray), 1916.
- Winkler, Ernest William, The Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas, 1861, Austin, 1912.
- Wooten, Dudley, History of Texas, Dallas (Texas History Company), 1935.
- Yoakum, H., History of Texas, I-II, Austin (The Steck Company), 1935.

The vita has been removed from the digitized version of this document.